The Social and Political Thought of Yen Fu

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Abstract

This thesis is intended to provide a new interpretation of the social and political thought of Yen Fu (1854-1921). Yen Fu was the first person to introduce Western social and political ideas systematically into China, and consequently played a major role in furthering intellectual change in modern China.

The received interpretation of Yen Fu's thought emphasizes the influence of social Darwinism on his preoccupation with state power and with China's ability to survive an international struggle for existence. This established interpretation considers that Yen Fu deformed Western liberalism as a means to achieve state power.

This thesis argues that Yen Fu did not adopt social Darwinism to justify ruthless struggles within society or between different societies. Rather he drew from Darwinist thought the idea of a universal law of social evolution and concluded that China must change its traditional culture and system by following the model of the modern West.

This thesis presents Yen Fu as the pioneer of modern Chinese liberalism. It argues that Yen Fu's ideas on liberty and democracy were influenced by both British liberalism and the Confucian tradition. At the core of his liberalism were proposals to define a sphere in which the individual can act freely without interference from the state or society, to establish the rule of law in order to prevent the tyrannical power of the state, and to limit state power both in the sphere of moral education and in the sphere of economic activities. He also appreciated democracy as a means of fulfilling the Confucian ideal of social harmony. However, his gradualist approach towards China's democratic transition led to his criticism of democracy in his later years.

The arguments of this thesis are based on the extensive use of previously unexplored writings of Yen Fu.

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INTRODUCTION

In the late nineteenth century, the mainstream of Chinese thought experienced profound change unparalleled in the history of China since the time of Confucius. The only other period of intellectual change remotely comparable to the intellectual change of modern China was the introduction of Buddhism from India which catalyzed the emergence of Neo-Confucianism.[1] Yet the scale of intellectual change inspired by the introduction of Buddhism was less comprehensive than that of modern intellectual change. While the introduction of Buddhism greatly reshaped Chinese philosophy and religion, the change in modern China represented a comprehensive reexamination of every aspect of traditional ways of life - cultural, philosophical, social, and political alike. As Chang Hao stated, modern Chinese intellectuals did something they `had not done since the axial age of the late Chou, namely, to reexamine the institutional foundation of the Chinese political order.'[2]

Behind the profound intellectual change in modern China stood one dominant

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[1]On the introduction of Buddhism into China, see E. Zurcher, *The Buddhist Conquest of China: the Spread and Adaptation of Buddhism in Early Medieval China*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1972; Kenneth Ch'en, *Buddhism in China: A Historical Survey*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964; on Buddhism as a stimulus to the emergence of Neo-Confucianism, see Carsun Chang, *The Development of Neo-Confucian Thought*, New York: Bookman Associates, 1957, especially pp. 113-35.

[2]Chang Hao, *Chinese Intellectuals in Crisis: Search for Order and Meaning (1890-1911)*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987, p. 6. The notion `Axial Age' was first used by the German Philosopher, Karl Jaspers, to refer to the first millennium B. C. when a revolution took place in the realm of ideas within several major civilizations. The most significant aspect of these revolutions was the emergence, conceptualization, and institutionalization of a basic tension between the transcendental and mundane orders. This notion has recently gained great popularity in the study of Ancient Chinese culture. See Benjamin Schwartz, `Transcendence in Ancient China', *Daedalus*, Spring 1975, pp. 57-63; Benjamin Schwartz, *The World of Thought in Ancient China*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985; S.N. Eisenstadt ed., *The Origins and Diversity of Axial Civilization*, New York: State University of New York, 1986; Chang Hao, `Some Reflections on the Problems of the Axial-Age Breakthrough in Relation to Classical Confucianism', in *Ideas Across Cultures: Essays on Chinese Thought in Honour of Benjamin I. Schwartz*, ed. Paul A. Cohen & Merle Goldman, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990, pp. 17-31.

fact: `the intrusion of Western civilization'.[3] Both the cultural challenge and the military threat posed by the Western intrusion `undermined the stability and coherence of traditional culture', and thus brought about an intellectual crisis, or, as Lin Yu-sheng called it, `the crisis of Chinese consciousness' in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century China.[4]

As early as the 1840s, in the wake of the Opium War (1840-2), Chinese intellectuals became aware of a certain inadequacy of traditional Confucian orthodoxy in responding effectively to the challenges imposed by the Western intrusion, and this awareness was intensified following the second Opium War (1857-60). However, it was not until China's disastrous defeat in the Sino-Japanese war in 1894 that Chinese intellectuals began to doubt the fundamentals of Confucianism and started to seek what Kuhn called a new `paradigm' from Western thought.[5] The generation of intellectuals that `reached its intellectual maturity in the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first decade of twentieth century', as Benjamin Schwartz has noted, were the `real transformers of values and bearers of new ideas from the West.'[6]

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[3]Lin Yu-sheng, *The Crisis of Chinese Consciousness: Radical Anti-traditionalism in the May Fourth Era*, Madison: the University of Wisconsin Press, 1979, p. 10.

[4]Ibid. The notion that the Western challenge to China since the 1840s represented not only `a military threat' but also `a cultural challenge' is discussed in Tu Wei-ming, `Iconoclasm, Holistic Vision, and Patient Watchfulness: a Personal Reflection on the Modern Chinese Intellectual Quest', *Daedalus*, Spring, 1987, pp. 77-8.

[5]Thomas S. Kuhn has argued that scientific inquiry does not proceed by the random accumulation of data but rather is organized in accordance with a paradigmatic theory that the scientific community takes for granted at any one time in formulating problems and selecting the means to resolve them. `Scientific revolution' is a process in which the `crisis' in scientific thought created by repeated challenges to the accepted paradigm is resolved by the emergence and acceptance of a new paradigm. (Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, second edition, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970, Chapter vii & viii.) For an example of applying Kuhn's conception in study of modern Chinese intellectual change, see Arif Dirlik, *Revolution and History: the Origins of Marxist Historiography in China, 1919-1937*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978, pp. 5-13.

[6]Benjamin Schwartz, `Introduction', in *Reflections on the May Fourth Movement: A Symposium*, ed. Schwartz, Cambridge, Mass.: East Asian Research Centre, Harvard University, 1972, pp. 2, 4.

In this generation, Yen Fu (1854-1921) was a very important figure. Although he was not as politically influential as some of his contemporaries such as K'ang Yu-wei and Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, his influence on the intellectual development of modern China was no less significant than theirs. He was the first person who systematically introduced Western social and political ideas into China and thus he represented the beginning of continuous efforts by Chinese intellectuals to adopt foreign social and political theories as alternative paradigms to Confucianism. The particular questions he raised, and the specific methods he adopted to analyze those questions and answer them have had a profound and enduring influence on the direction and of the responses of modern Chinese intellectuals to China's crises.

Numerous studies have been published on Yen Fu's ideas and their influence on modern Chinese thought.[7] Among these works, Benjamin Schwartz's *In Search of Wealth and Power: Yen Fu and the West* has been by far the most influential work both in the study of Yen Fu and in studies of modern Chinese intellectual history as a whole. It has been for a long time regarded as a `classic work' in studies of modern Chinese intellectual history.[8]

In his work, Schwartz makes several important arguments concerning modern Chinese intellectual changes based on his analysis of Yen Fu. First he argues that modern Chinese intellectual discourse represents a radical discontinuity with traditional Chinese thought. Largely following Max Weber's analysis of Chinese religions, Schwartz believes that traditional Chinese culture lacks dynamism and the capacity to transform its society.[9] Transformative thinking in modern Chinese

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[7]Some Chinese studies include: Chou Chen-fu, *Yen Fu ssu-hsiang shu-p'ing* (A critical interpretation of Yen Fu's thought), Shanghai, Chung-hua, 1940; Wang Shih, *Yen Fu chuan* (Biography of Yen Fu), Shanghai, Jen-min, 1962; Commercial Press, ed. *Lun Yen Fu and Yen yi ming-chu* (On Yen Fu and his translations), Peking: Commercial Press, 1982; Western studies include: Benjamin I. Schwartz, *In Search of Wealth and Power: Yen Fu and the West*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1964; James Reeve Pusey's *China and Charles Darwin* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983) also includes several chapters on Yen Fu.

[8]Thomas Metzger, `Continuities between Modern and Premodern China: Some Neglected Methodological and Substantive Issues', in Paul A. Cohen & Merle Goldman ed., *Ideas Across Cultures*, p. 264.

[9]In his classic study of the Chinese religions, Weber maintained that Confucianism

intellectuals is a result of their acceptance of the European culture. The most important school of ideas to have provided modern Chinese intellectuals with transformative capacities, Schwartz asserts, is social Darwinism. Social Darwinism, according to Schwartz, shaped Yen Fu's thought and the entirety of modern Chinese thought in two ways. First, it shaped the moral goals of society for modern Chinese intellectuals by providing the intellectual impetus for the emergence of Chinese nationalism. According to this argument, traditional Chinese thought lacked nationalistic identification, and only had a form of cultural consciousness - an identification with universalistic moral goals and values. This explained why Chinese elites failed to reform the country vigorously and pursue wealth and power for the Chinese state in the face of foreign invasions during the late nineteenth century. For traditional Chinese elites, preservation of the Chinese way of life was more important than preservation of the Chinese state. Due to the introduction of social Darwinism, Chinese elites learned that China was a `nation state' rather than a culture.[10] As `cells of the organism known as China', Chinese individuals would have to treat the survival of the Chinese state as an organism as an ultimate goal.[11] Thus traditional `Chinese culturalism' was transformed into modern nationalism.[12] This transformation was so

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`reduced tension with the world to an absolute minimum.... Completely absent in the Confucian ethic was any tension... between ethical demand and human shortcoming.'(Max Weber, *The Religion of China*, translated by Hans H. Gerth, New York: the Free Press, 1964, pp. 227-8.) Thus, Weber asserted that Confucianism provided no `leverage' with which to transform the social order. Confucianism, as Weber saw it, is a doctrine of `adjustment to the outside, to the condition of the world', rather than a doctrine of transforming the world.(Ibid., p. 235.) It is generally been held that this Weberian theme formed the basis of Schwartz's analysis of Yen Fu. (Thomas Metzger, `Max Weber's Analysis of the Confucian Tradition: a Critique',in *The American Asian Review*, vol 2, No. 1, Spring, 1984, p. 45; Guy S. Alitto, `Introduction to Review Symposium: Thomas A. Metzger's *Escape from Predicament*', in *Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. xxxix, No. 2, February, 1980, p. 237.)

[10]Benjamin Schwartz, *In Search of Wealth and Power*, p. 56.

[11]Ibid., p. 57.

[12]Ibid., pp. 56-8. The sharp distinction between traditional Chinese culturalism and modern Chinese nationalism was first systematically stated by Joseph Levenson, *Modern China and its Confucian Past: the Problem of Intellectual Continuity* (New York: Anchor Books, 1964). According to this distinction, the traditional Chinese

complete for the majority of Chinese elites, according to Schwartz, that the entire modern Chinese intellectual quest became an endless search for the `wealth and power' of the Chinese state. This nationalistic obsession pushed Chinese intellectuals to embrace various Western ideas in order to find an efficient way of achieving national power.[13]

Social Darwinism not only shaped moral goals of society for Yen Fu, Schwartz further argued, but it also provided him with the means of fulfilling such a nationalistic goal. By Schwartz's interpretation, the basis of these means was `the Promethean-Faustian ethos of European civilization'. The core of this ethos, Schwartz suggested, values the exaltation of human energy, glorifies the struggle and conquest of external nature and the enormous growth of social and political powers within human society.[14]

The social Darwinian search for the wealth and power of the state as well as its stress on individual energy and dynamism, Schwartz argued, formed the nucleus of Yen Fu's thought and shaped his so-called liberal and democratic outlook. Unlike Western liberals and democrats who, according to Schwartz, take liberty and democracy and the `concept of the worth of persons within society' as ends in themselves,[15] Yen Fu took freedom and democracy as the means to elevating individual energy and ultimately promoting the wealth and power of the Chinese state.[16] This `deformation of the values of liberalism', Schwartz argued, was a prelude

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self-image was `culturalism', based on a common historical heritage and acceptance of shared beliefs, rather than nationalism, based on the modern concept of nation-state. For a critique of the dichotomy between culturalism and nationalism, see James Townsend, `Chinese Nationalism', *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, (No. 27, January 1992, pp. 97-130).

[13]This is the basic theme of Schwartz's study of Yen Fu. His discussion of Yen Fu's ideas is undertaken within this framework. For a summary of this theme, see Benjamin Schwartz, *In Search of Wealth and Power*, especially Chapter xii, `Some Implications', pp. 237-47.

[14]Ibid., pp. 238-9.

[15]Ibid., p. 240.

[16]Ibid., p. 134.

to the inevitable failure of liberalism in modern China.[17] A fundamental incompatibility existed between the Chinese intellectuals' embrace of Western liberalism and their aspiration for national salvation. There is always a possibility, Schwartz argued, that there are shorter roads than liberalism to the nationalistic end.[18] The `positive authoritarianism' of the Soviet Union, according to Schwartz, proved to be one of these `shorter roads'.[19]

The influence of Schwartz's arguments in his study of Yen Fu has been enormous in Western studies of modern Chinese history, particularly in intellectual history. As some students of Chinese history put it, across the last four decades, Schwartz `became a major force in the field of Chinese studies, setting standards - above all in the area of intellectual history - that have been a guide and source of inspiration to students and scholars not only in the United States but world wide.'[20] The theme of discontinuity between traditional and modern Chinese thought as articulated by Schwartz has been one of the most significant theories of modern Chinese intellectual history for several decades.[21] Most of all, Schwartz's argument about the predominance of social Darwinism in modern Chinese thought, particularly his equation of the modern Chinese intellectual quest with a quest for the wealth and power of the Chinese nation-state and his dismissal of modern Chinese liberals as having failed to catch the essence of Western liberal tradition, has greatly influenced studies of modern Chinese intellectual development.[22]

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[17]Ibid., p. 241.

[18]Ibid., p. 240.

[19]Ibid., pp. 240-1.

[20]Paul A. Cohen & Merle Goldman, `Introduction', in *Ideas Across Cultures*, ed. Cohen & Goldman, pp. 1-2.

[21]On the influence of the theme of discontinuity between traditional and modern Chinese thought on studies of modern Chinese history, see Paul A. Cohen, *Discovering History in China: American Historical Writing on the Recent Chinese Past*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1984, pp. 57-78.

[22]This argument can be seen in many studies on modern Chinese intellectual history such as, Paul A. Cohen, *Between Tradition and Modernity: Wang T'ao and Reform in Late Ch'ing China*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987;

Recently, new work has emerged which casts doubt on some important themes in Schwartz's interpretation of Yen Fu. Some students of traditional Chinese philosophy, notably de Bary and Tu Wei-ming, have challenged the Weberian theme of the stagnancy of Confucianism. They have argued that Confucianism, and Neo-Confucianism in particular, has a strong tendency to encourage innovation in the search for a good society, rather than simply following tradition.[23] The most eloquent statement of this claim has been made by Thomas Metzger.[24] According to Metzger, there existed a strong sense of predicament in Neo-Confucianism which was comparable to the pervasive tension that Weber found in the Puritan definition of the human condition: between the Neo-Confucian desire of bringing about changes in the social-political order to fulfil the Confucian moral goal and the inadequacy of the means available to them for attaining that goal. Modern Chinese transformative thought, Metzger argued, was derived from this sense of predicament of Neo-Confucianism. Modern Chinese intellectual change was a process in which intellectuals received from the West modern technology, new techniques of political participation and new forms of knowledge which provided the means by which intellectuals could realize their Neo-Confucian goals in society. Thus, Metzger argued, Chinese intellectuals finally found escape from their Confucian predicament.[25]

In addition, numerous studies have directly or indirectly challenged

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Hao Chang, *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and Intellectual Transition in China, 1890-1907*, Harvard University Press, 1971; Lin Yu-sheng, *The Crisis of Chinese Consciousness: Radical Anti-traditionalism in the May Fourth Era.*

[23]Wm. Theodore de Bary, `introduction', in *The Unfolding of Neo-Confucianism*, ed. de Bary et al., New York: Columbia University Press, 1975, esp. pp. 1-2; de Bary, *East Asian Civilization*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988; Tu Wei-ming, *Confucian Thought: Selfhood as Creative Transformation*, New York: State University of New York Press, 1985.

[24]Thomas Metzger, *Escape from Predicament: Neo-Confucianism and China's Political Culture*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1977; `Max Weber's Analysis of the Confucian Tradition: a Critique', in *The American Asian Review*, vol. 2, No. 1 (Spring, 1984), pp. 28-70.

[25]Metzger, *Escape from Predicament*, pp. 14-18.

Schwartz's claim that the modern Chinese intellectual quest is reducible to a quest for the`wealth and power' of the Chinese state. Studies on the origins and developments of such ideologies and movements of modern China as socialism, communism and anarchism have demonstrated that the utopian quest for an ideal society has been an equally strong, if not stronger, motivation underlying the Chinese intellectuals' embrace of various Western ideologies.[26] Thus some efforts have been made to redefine the nature of modern Chinese intellectual development. Chang Hao argues that the modern Chinese intellectual's quest is not limited to the spheres of political, social, or even broadly cultural, but is ethical and existential as well.[27] This multidimensional feature of modern Chinese intellectual quests is called by Thomas Metzger the `modern Chinese intellectual *problematique*'. At its broadest, this *problematique* entails the reconstitution of both self and society in a discourse of modernity, which calls forth questions not only of social and political form, but ultimately, of the meaning and ends of individual existence.[28] Vera Schwarcz argues the cases of two dimensions in modern Chinese intellectual development: the dimension of nationalism and the dimension of cultural criticism, or, as she puts it, `enlightenment'.[29]

While these efforts at redefining the nature of modern Chinese intellectual

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[26]On the relation of utopianism and the origin of socialism, see Martin Bernal, *Chinese Socialism to 1907*, London: Cornell University Press, 1976; on utopianism and the emergence of communism in modern China, see, Frederic Wakeman, Jr., *History and Will: Philosophical Perspectives of Mao Tse-tung Thought*, Berkeley: University of California Press 1973; Maurice Meisner, *Marxism, Maoism and Utopianism*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982; on anarchism see, Arif Dirlik, *Anarchism in the Chinese Revolution*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.

[27]Chang Hao, *Chinese Intellectuals in Crisis: Search for Order and Meaning*, `Introduction'.

[28]Thomas Metzger, `Developmental Criteria and Indigenously Conceived Options: A Normative Approach to China's Modernization in Recent Times', *Issue and Studies*, February 1987, p. 72.

[29]Vera Schwarcz, *The Chinese Enlightenment: Intellectuals and the Legacy of the May Fourth Movement of 1919*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986, pp. 1-2.

change are inspiring, one thing noticeably missing from these efforts is an analysis of the generation which has been often called the `breakthrough generation', namely the generation of the 1890s and 1900s. With the exception of Hsiao Kung-chuan's study of K'ang Yu-wei which provided a balanced account of K'ang's inheritance of tradition and his debt to Western ideas, K'ang's utopian vision of `a modern China and a new world' as well as his nationalistic concern, no serious studies of the most prominent figures of the 1890s and 1900s have been advanced for decades.[30] In the case of Yen Fu, there has been no reinterpretation of his thought since Schwartz's work almost three decades ago.[31]

The relevance of this `breakthrough generation' for the reinterpretation of the nature of modern Chinese intellectual development is obvious. First, on the issue of whether modern Chinese intellectual discourse represents a break with traditional thought, this generation provides the best answer. While Metzger's argument that traditional Confucianism had transformative ideas is well supported by his sophisticated interpretation of Neo-Confucianism, his argument that modern Chinese intellectuals adopted Western ideas as means of fulfilling Confucian ideals remains, by and large, hypothetical unless it is supported by studies of this generation. Secondly, on the issue of whether modern Chinese liberal thinkers were committed to some important Western liberal values or distorted the essence of Western liberalism, some important figures in this generation also provide the best cases to examine.

In this context, this thesis reexamines Yen Fu's thought focusing on Yen Fu's ideas on some important issues confronting modern Chinese intellectuals, particularly the issue of whether China should make fundamental changes, what kinds of changes should be sought and how these changes should proceed. Through exploring Yen Fu's ideas on these issues, it attempts to shed light on evolution of modern Chinese thought.

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[30]Hsiao Kung-chuan, *A Modern China and a New World: K'ang Yu-wei, Reformer and Utopian, 1858-1927*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1975.

[31]There have been some criticisms of certain ideas in Schwartz's study on Yen Fu, such as Hoyt Cleveland Tillman, `Yen Fu's Utilitarianism in Chinese Perspective', in Paul A. Cohen & Merle Goldman ed., *Ideas Across Cultures*, pp. 63-84, and some chapters in James Pusey's *China and Charles Darwin*.

The argument of this thesis is intended to demonstrate, firstly, that Yen Fu's intellectual concerns were much greater than merely nationalistic concerns. Yen Fu accepted modern Western social and political ideas not simply as effective means of achieving the wealth and power of the Chinese state, but as some universally valid ideas for addressing certain universal human concerns. Yen Fu's appreciation of modern Western civilization displayed some features of utopianism. This utopianism reflected the influence of the Confucian notion of an ideal society. Yet this Confucian ideal was dramatically transformed, through adopting Western evolutionary theory of the nineteenth century, from the lost Golden Age of antiquity to a future stage of human progress.

Based on such a understanding, this thesis analyses Yen Fu's ideas on important social and political issues, such as liberty, democracy and revolution. It will show how Yen Fu, a man of deep Confucian background and considerable knowledge of modern Western civilization, reflected the two different social and political traditions, and how these reflections shaped his views on social and political change in China. It will argue that Yen Fu's interpretation of Western political ideas should not be understood simply as either total acceptance or distortion. Rather, it should be analyzed as a dialogue of two civilizations. Yen Fu considered both Western ideas and traditional Chinese ideas as sharing some universal human desire to seek an ideal society. He was very much impressed by some fundamental aspects of modern Western civilization and adopted them as a way of challenging traditional Chinese thinking. He simultaneously voiced his criticism of some aspects of Western civilization largely from the viewpoint of Chinese tradition.

This thesis begins with a chapter on Yen Fu's life and works. As there have been already detailed accounts of Yen's life in previous studies, my description will be brief, except for that of Yen Fu's early life (1854-95). On Yen Fu's early life, particularly his knowledge of Western social and political theories before he started to publish essays and articles in 1895, we now have more information than has been available which enables us to provide a more detailed account.

The main argument of this thesis is divided into two parts. The first part (Chapters II-IV) will explore Yen Fu's philosophical justification of change in China promoted by learning from the West. It will start with examining Yen Fu's concern

with Darwinism. As the influence of Darwinism has been a major subject of studies in modern Chinese intellectual history and the basis of Schwartz's analysis of Yen Fu, two chapters will be devoted to this topic. They will argue that the main debt of Yen Fu to Darwinism is not nationalism, as generally conceived, but a progressive and deterministic outlook. Chapter II will demonstrate that Yen Fu adopted Western evolutionary theory as the most scientific method to unveil the universal law of social evolution, to understand China's current position on the universal evolutionary process, to indicate China's direction of change and to show mechanisms for achieving this change. Chapter III discusses Yen Fu's understanding of the Darwinian notion of `struggle for existence'. It will show that the conventional interpretation of Yen Fu's adoption of the notion of struggle for existence as his foundation for the nationalistic search for wealth and power of the state is largely misleading. It will argue that Yen Fu's notion of the struggle for existence demonstrates a universalistic concern for human progress, and for China to be recognized as an enlightened member of civilization.

In addition to Darwinism, Yen Fu also adopted utilitarianism in his argument for change. Chapter IV explores Yen Fu's utilitarian ideas. It will demonstrate that he adopted utilitarian ideas mainly from British utilitarians, and partly by revitalizing some ideas of Legalism. He accepted utilitarianism as a vehicle for rational thought which challenged the authority of Confucian tradition on the one hand and provided a basis for social, economic and political change on the other.

Part Two includes three chapters (Chapters V-VII). It explores Yen Fu's vision of China's social, economic and political reforms, as well as his ideas for obtaining those reforms. Unlike the first part of the thesis which focuses on challenging the received views, Part Two is by and large exploratory. The study of Yen Fu in the West has been long dominated by Schwartz's work which views Yen Fu's liberal and democratic ideas as simple adoptions of existing Western ideas to enhance the wealth and power of the Chinese state. Consequently, no serious effort has been made to explore Yen Fu's intellectual enterprise in transplanting Western liberal and democratic ideas and systems to the soil of China. By the same token, Yen Fu's criticism of the Chinese political tradition, as well as his interpretation of Western liberal and democratic ideas and systems, have not been seriously analyzed. I will

demonstrate that Yen Fu's ideas about China's social and political change contain many observations which will be of great interest to students of both Chinese history and Western political theory.

Chapter V explores Yen Fu's ideas about liberty and law. It will demonstrate that Yen Fu accepted some basic ideas of nineteenth century British liberalism, including the idea of negative liberty, limited government, and the rule of law. Yet he stopped short of embracing Western individualism due to the influence of the Confucian emphasis on individual responsibility instead of individual rights. Chapter VI examines Yen Fu's views on democracy. It shows that Yen Fu derived democratic ideas both from modern Western political thought and from some elements in traditional Chinese political thought. It presents Yen Fu's dilemma on the issue of democracy, where he is torn between the desirability of democracy and the conditions it requires. Chapter VII examines Yen Fu's political position in some of the most important political events of his time. It focuses on some political predicaments a moderate liberal will confront in a revolutionary era.

Finally, Chapter VIII concludes the thesis by summarising its main arguments and, more importantly, by exploring some general implications of this study for the studies of modern Chinese intellectual history as a whole.

The claim to originality for this thesis is based on two criteria. First, it makes extensive use of previously unexplored materials. Previous studies of Yen Fu, as represented by Schwartz's work, based their analysis largely on Yen Fu's translations as well as some collections of his writings published between the 1920s and the 1950s.[32] Those collections, however, have only included about half of Yen Fu's writings. Recently, Yen Fu's biographer, Wang Shih, made an extraordinary effort to search for and collect Yen Fu's essays, letters and other writings from journals, newspapers of Yen's time and other sources. The fruits of his efforts were published in 1986 as a five volume collection entitled *Yen Fu chi* (The collected works of Yen Fu), which represented a substantial enlargement of Yen Fu's writings over previous

[32]The main collections of Yen Fu's writings published up to the 1950s include: Kung Shao-chin et al ed., *Yen Chi-tao shih-wen ch'ao* (A collection of Yen Fu's essays and poetry), Shanghai, 1922; *Yen Chi-tao hsien-sheng yi-chu* (Posthumous works of Mr Yen Fu), Singapore: Nan-yang hsueh-hui, 1959.

editions.[33] There has not yet been any research done to explore these newly available materials. In addition, I have found some of Yen Fu's letters and published essays, including two essays published in English, which were not included in Wang Shih's collection.[34]

While Yen Fu's ideas included in these newly available materials are by and large in line with those found in previously available materials, they nevertheless provide additional information which will enrich or even alter some of our received understanding of Yen Fu. For instance, regarding Yen Fu's relation with Darwinism, we now know, through some newly available essays of Yen Fu on evolutionary theory, that Yen Fu's knowledge of nineteenth-century Western evolutionary biology and social science was much broader and deeper than previously assumed. We also know, through his essays such as `Is it True that Might is Right?', `On Hegel's Philosophy of Mind', and his criticism of nationalism, that Yen Fu's attitude towards social Darwinism as a moral and political doctrine was far more complicated than one of simple acceptance as indicated by Schwartz and others. Regarding Yen Fu's ideas of democratic transition and revolution, some newly available materials, particularly his several essays on constitutionalism during 1905 and 1906, and his criticism of the 1911 Revolution, provide much needed information for reconstructing Yen Fu's

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[33] *Yen Fu chi* (The collected works of Yen Fu), ed. Wang Shih, 5 vols., Peking: *Chung-hua*, 1986 (hereafter referred to as CYFW). By Wang Shih's estimate, various previous collections of Yen Fu's writings include around 560,000 words, and his collection added a further 500,000 words. (CYFW, vol. 5, pp. 1577-87)

[34] Writings in Chinese include: `Yen Fu chih Hsia Tseng-yu' (Three letters to Hsia Tseng Yu), (1902, 1906, 1906), reprinted in *Chung-kuo tse-hsueh* (Chinese Philosophy), No. 6, 1981; `Yu ch'iang-ch'uan wu kung-li tsu-yü hsin-yü?' (Is it true that might is right?), *Chih-li chiao-yü tsa-chih* (Chih-li Educational Review), vol. 2, No. 9, June 1906; `Lun kuo-chia yü wei li-hsien tzu-chien yu k'e-hsing tzu yao-cheng' (Some feasible reform policies should be adopted before introducing constitutionalism), *Chih-li chiao-yü tsa-chih* (Chih-li Educational Review), vol. 1, No. 13 & 14, September & October 1906; `Meng-te-ssu-chiu Fa-yi chih chih-na lun' (Montesquieu on China in his *the Spirit of the Laws*', *Cheng-yi tung-pao*, Peking, vol. 5, No. 13-15, August - September, 1906. Writings in English include: `Two Letters to G. E. Morrison' (1911, 1912), in *The Correspondence of G. E. Morrison*, ed. Lo, Hui-min, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976, vol. 1, pp. 652-7, 768-9; `A Historical Account of Ancient Political Societies in China', *The Chinese Social and Political Science Review*, vol. 1, No. 4, (pp.18-23), Peking, 1916.

general ideas on democracy and revolution, an area somehow neglected by Schwartz's work. These newly available materials also shed light on Yen Fu's complex attitude towards Chinese tradition.

The second and most important basis of originality for this thesis is the distinctive interpretation of Yen Fu's thought. While this new interpretation certainly benefits from the newly available materials, it is nevertheless mainly based on a theoretical reconstruction of Yen Fu's ideas. This reconstruction is made possible first by the methods I have adopted. This thesis is not intended to add another chapter to the intellectual biography of Yen Fu. Rather, it focuses on exploring Yen Fu's ideas on some fundamental issues which confronted modern Chinese intellectuals. This method allows more scope for examining the inner logic of Yen Fu's thought without always tackling his practical activities. Secondly, this reconstruction of Yen Fu's thought is made possible by a conscious effort of avoiding overgeneralization. Rather than directly tackling hotly debated issues such as whether Yen Fu represented discontinuity with tradition or whether he distorted Western liberal and democratic ideas, this thesis focuses primarily on how Yen Fu reflected traditional ideas and how he interpreted Western liberal and democratic theories.

Through such a reconstruction of Yen Fu's thought, there emerges a drastically different picture of Yen Fu from that in Schwartz's work. My interpretation of Yen Fu's relation with Western evolutionary theory, utilitarianism, and liberal democratic theory, my assessment of Yen Fu's relations with traditional Chinese thought, and my interpretation of the weakness of Yen Fu's liberal ideas contrast sharply with previous studies.

Chapter I

The Man and His Work

I

Yen Fu was born in January 1854 into a well-to-do family in a village near the south coast of China.[1] A decade after the Opium War which opened China's door to foreign trade and missionary influence, life went on as traditionally as before. This was clearly illustrated by Yen's early education. He started school at seven years of age learning the Confucian classics. The goal of this education was to give him the opportunity for a career as a civil servant to be achieved by performing well in examinations. Yen Fu's father invited the best tutors he could afford for the boy's education, including a renowned scholar in the province, Huang Shao-yen. Huang reportedly placed equal weight on Han and Sung learning, the two main Confucian schools of the time. By the age of thirteen, according to one account Yen Fu had already acquired a solid knowledge of the classics.[2]

The death of Yen Fu's father in 1866 abruptly cut off the prospects of a continued education to become a civil servant. The family fortunes were suddenly reversed. Unable to pay the tuition fees for her son's traditional education, Yen Fu's mother reluctantly sent him off to a newly established school of `Western affairs', the Foochow Shipyard School, which provided students with stipends and allowances.

The Foochow Shipyard School was one of the first Chinese schools involved in `Western learning', and part of the `Self-strengthening' movement.[3] The school was

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[1]Yen's birth place was Yang-ch'i-hsiang in the Hou-kuan prefecture of Fukien province, near today's Foochow city.

[2]For a detailed account of Yen Fu's early life and his family, see Yen Chia-li (Yen Fu's nephew), `Yen Fu hsien-sheng chi-ch'i chia-t'ing' (Mr. Yen Fu and his family', in *Fukien wen-shih tzu-liao)* (Source materials on the culture and history of Fukien province), No. 5 (1981), pp. 78-91.

[3]The `Self-strengthening' movement was initiated by several powerful officials of the Ch'ing government in the wake of the Second Opium war (1858-1860). The main aim of the movement was to enhance the wealth and strength of the country by modernizing the military and developing industry. Under this aim, a series of programmes were launched including the establishment of several modern

founded in 1866 and the first school entrance examination was held in November of that year. Aware that there would not be a rush of students for such unorthodox education, the school `proposed that substantial monthly allowances be offered as an inducement and that the work not be too difficult at first.'[4] As expected, most applicants came from impoverished local families.[5] The entrance examination was a composition on the topic of `Life-long Filial Devotion to One's Parents'. Yen Fu's essay won him first place among the applicants and he was admitted, with dozens of others, to the school.

The school consisted of two parts, the School of Naval Architecture, where French language and French instruction prevailed, and the School of Navigation, where language and instruction were in English. Yen Fu spent the next five years in the English division of the school.[6] Besides the English language, he took courses such as arithmetic, geometry, algebra, analytic geometry, trigonometry, physics, mechanics, chemistry, geology, astronomy, and navigation. In addition, as part of the curriculum, he also spent time studying the *Sacred Edict of the Emperor of K'ang hsi*, the *Classic of Filial Piety*, as well as Chinese history.[7]

J. G. D., an otherwise unidentified visitor to the Foochow Shipyard School early in 1870 reported his observations of the school in the *North-China Herald*

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government schools: the Peking, the Shanghai, and the Canton language schools (*t'ung-wen kuan*), and the Foochow Shipyard School. For a detailed account of those schools, see Knight Biggerstaff, *The Earliest Modern Government Schools in China*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1961.

[4]Knight Biggerstaff, op. cit, pp. 205-6.

[5]Pao Tsun-p'eng, `Ch'ing-chi hai-chün chiao-yü chi-ch'i ying-hsiang' (Naval education and its Influences in the Ch'ing era), in *Chung-kuo chin-tai-shih lun-chi* (Selected essays on modern Chinese history), ed. Chung-kuo wen-hua fu-hsing wei-yuan-hui (the Committee for Chinese Culture Renaissance), Taipei: Commercial Press, vol. 8, 1985, p. 501.

[6]The English division was directed by James Carroll, an Englishman. Its general aim was to train officers to operate ships. (Knight Biggerstaff, *The Earliest Modern Government Schools in China*, p. 214.)

[7]Pao Tsun-p'eng, `Ch'ing-chi hai-chün chiao-yü chi-ch'i ying-hsiang' (Naval education and its Influences in the Ch'ing era), p. 504.

(April 21, 1870), an English language newspaper published in Shanghai. About the students in the English division, he wrote:

> The pupils of first class, thirty in number, were submitted to an unpremeditated examination in mathematics, algebra, conic sections, dynamical laws, fluxions, hydrostatics, etc., and answered perfectly well, and with a readiness which was astonishing to us. We were informed that the young Chinese students studied the exact sciences so eagerly that the foreign superintendents had found it necessary to forbid that any student should prolong his studies after 10 or 11 o'clock at night. The young Chinese spoke correct and good English and the jargon and pidgin English is not to be heard.[8]

Yen Fu graduated with high honours in 1871. After several years at sea, he was sent to Britain for further naval studies with eleven other naval officers.[9] This was the first time China had sent students to study in Europe.[10] Yen and his colleagues arrived in Britain in May 1877. After a short stay in the Portsmouth naval base, he enrolled in the Royal Naval College, Greenwich on October 1877.[11] He graduated from the college in 1879 and returned to China in June 1879.

There is little information available about Yen Fu's student life in Britain other than some references in the diary of Kuo Sung-t'ao, the first Chinese

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[8]Quoted by Knight Biggerstaff, *The Earliest Modern Government Schools in China*, pp. 214-15.

[9]On the history of dispatching Chinese naval students to Britain, see Wang Chia-chien, `Ch'ing-mo hai-chün liu-ying hsueh-sheng ti p'ai-chien chi-ch'i ying-hsiang' (Sending naval students to Britain in the Late Ch'ing and its influences), in *Chung-kuo chin-tai-shih lun-chi* (Selected essays on modern Chinese history) vol. 8, pp. 450-62.

[10]Several years previously (1872), China sent one hundred children to study in the United States.

[11]Archive records in the Royal Naval College, Greenwich refer to the `payments of fees' by Yen Fu on November and December 1878 for `a second session'.

ambassador to Britain (1876-1878). Kuo kept close contact with the Chinese naval students, and had a special friendship with Yen Fu. According to Kuo's account, the subject of Yen Fu's study in the Royal Naval College was naval command. His curriculum included mechanics, chemistry, physics, mathematics, navigation, and current international military affairs, such as the German-French war and the Russian-Turkish war.[12] According to Kuo, Yen Fu was very impressed by the depth and richness of Western science and technology,[13] by the physical strength of Westerners in contrast to the Chinese,[14] and above all, by the social, economic and political ideas and systems of Britain. Yen seemed to have paid a great deal of attention to the general social, economic and political situation in Britain, and tried to understand the differences between Britain and China. He `often spent whole days and nights discussing differences and similarities between Chinese and Western thought and political institutions' with the Ambassador Kuo Sung-t'ao.[15] He visited the British law courts and remarked to Kuo that `the reason why England and other countries of Europe are wealthy and strong is that impartial justice is daily extended. Here is the ultimate source.'[16] By contrasting Britain with China, Yen Fu developed very critical attitudes towards the current Chinese situation. In a conversation with Kuo Sung-t'ao, Yen criticized the conservative attitudes of Chinese officials as demonstrated by their opposition to everything from the West, e.g. railways, ships and technology alike.[17] He also criticized arguments used by some Chinese scholar-officials to suggest that

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[12]Kuo Sung-t'ao, *Kuo Sung-t'ao jih-chi* (Diary of Kuo Sung-t'ao), 4 vols., ed. Hunan jen-min ch'u-pan-she, Changsha: jen-min, 1982, vol. 3, pp. 406-7. For a brief account of Kuo's mission in Britain and some translations from his diary, see J. D. Frodsham, *The First Chinese Embassy to the West, the Journals of Kuo Sung-t'ao, Liu Hsi-hung and Chang Te-yi*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974.

[13]Kuo Sung-t'ao, *Kuo Sung-t'ao jih-chi* (Diary of Kuo Sung-t'ao), vol. 3, p. 517.

[14]Ibid., p. 407.

[15]Wang Ch'ü-ch'ang, *Yen Chi-tao nien-p'u* (Chronological biography of Yen Fu), Shanghai, 1936, p. 7.

[16]CYFW, vol. 4, p. 969.

[17]Kuo Sung-t'ao, *Kuo Sung-t'ao jih-chi* (Diary of Kuo Sung-t'ao), vol. 3, p. 444.

Western science and culture originated in China.[18] He told Kuo that the Chinese people had to change their pattern of thinking before any real progress could be made in China. The most important change should be `abolishing taboos'.[19]

Yen Fu's earliest access to Western social and political ideas was also during his two year in Britain. Among the Western ideas which most impressed Yen Fu were perhaps those of Darwin and other evolutionists.[20] At the time of his stay in Britain, Darwin's ideas roused great excitement in social and political studies. As Trevelyan noted, it was `a time of active political, philosophical and religious speculations, carried on in an atmosphere of freedom, with the impact of Darwin and Huxley to stimulate it with new conceptions of the universe.'[21] Herbert Spencer, whose name was often related to the application of Darwinist biology to social and political studies, as Leslie Paul has noted, became a household word.[22] While there are no records of Yen Fu's exposure to the works of Darwin and other evolutionary writers during his stay in Britain, there can be little doubt that Yen Fu at least became aware of Darwinism when he was in Britain. In his essay, `The Root of Strength' (*Yuan-ch'iang*, 1895), Yen Fu described the popularity of Darwinism in the West:

> After Darwin's *The Origin of Species* came out, it was soon found in

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[18]Ibid.

[19]Ibid., p. 474.

[20]Recent research has suggested that Yen Fu might have been exposed to Darwinism before his visit to Britain. As evidence, this study noted that Darwin's *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex* (1871) was reviewed in 1873 in *Shen-pao*, a newspaper published in Shanghai. In the same year, Sir Charles Lyell's *Principles of Geology*, which loomed large in the formation of evolutionary theories of Darwin and Spencer, was abridged and translated into Chinese. (Wang Tzu-chun and Chang Ping-lun, `Ta-erh-wen hsueh-shuo tsai chung-kuo tsao-ch'i ti ch'uan-po yü ying-hsiang' [The earliest dissemination of Darwin's theory in China and its influences], in *Chung-kuo tse-hsueh* [Chinese Philosophy], No. 9, 1983, pp. 365-8.)

[21]G. M. Trevelyan, `Introducing the Ideas and Beliefs of the Victorians', in *Ideas and Beliefs of the Victorians: a Historic Reevaluation of the Victorian Age*, ed., Harman Grisewood, London: Sylvan Press, 1949, p. 18.

[22]Leslie Paul, *The English Philosophers*, London: Faber and Faber, 1962, p. 53.

> almost every home in Europe and America, and the scholarship, government and philosophy of the West all dramatically changed. ... Every scholar became conversant with some ideas of Darwin and theorists used Darwinism as the basis for their arguments.[23]

This statement probably drew on his own experience in England.

In addition to Darwinism, Yen Fu might have become familiar with the reputation and possibly the writings of Adam Smith, John Stuart Mill and other liberal thinkers. In his diary, Kuo Sung-t'ao recorded a conversation with Inoue Kaoru, a Japanese financial officer visiting London:

> When I asked him what foreign books he had read, he listed the books of Adam Smith and John Stuart Mill. His discussions about economic affairs contained many sound ideas. By comparison [with the Japanese], our Chinese knowledge of Western learning is more than ten thousand miles behind. What a shame it is![24]

Yen had a close friendship with Kuo and they often discussed differences between Western and Chinese political thought and institutions. It seems likely that Kuo mentioned to Yen Fu his knowledge of Smith and Mill, whom Kuo knew were very significant in Western thought.

Yen Fu returned to China in 1879, initially to teach in the Foochow Shipyard School. He was invited in 1880 to the newly established Peiyang Naval Academy in Tientsin, first as dean (tsung chiao-hsi). He was promoted to superintendent (*tsung-pan*) in 1890. His decades in the naval academy (1880-1900) seemed not to have been happy. He was not satisfied with the policies of the Self-strengthening movement. From his experience in Britain, he realized that much broader reforms than simply the adoption of Western military and industrial technology were needed to revitalize the country. He particularly saw a change in the thinking of intellectuals and the reform

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[23]CYFW., vol. 1, p. 16.

[24]Kuo Sung-t'ao, *Kuo Sung-t'ao jih-chi* (Diary of Kuo Sung-t'ao), vol. 3, p. 169.

of political institutions as essential for China's progress.[25] On a personal level, Yen felt that he was not given the proper position to use his abilities fully.[26] Partly due to his unorthodox education and to his radical social and political opinions, he never gained the trust of his patron, Li Hung-chang, then the governor-general of Chih-li.[27] Yen tried to enhance his career by taking the traditional examination several times, but he failed each time.

Besides his dissatisfaction with his position in the Peiyang Naval Academy of Tientsin, we know little about his activities there before 1895, the year when he began to publish essays and translations advocating reform. Yet one gets the impression that this was an important period in his intellectual development, particularly for broadening his knowledge of Western social and political theories. He recorded reading Herbert Spencer's *The Study of Sociology* in 1881.[28] He recalled being impressed by the work and called it the best book he had ever read.[29] He reportedly acquired and began reading Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* in 1892.[30] Several channels probably provided him with up-to-date information about major developments in Western social theory. First, the majority of teachers in the naval academy were from Britain.[31] Yen Fu might have broadened his knowledge of Western thought through contacts with those teachers. Secondly, some bookshops in China had begun to carry Western language books. Yen Fu mentioned acquiring

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[25]Wang Chü-ch'ang, *Yen Chi-tao nien-p'u* (Chronological Biography of Yen Fu), p. 10.

[26]See Yen Fu's letters to his brother, Kuan-lan, in 1894 and 1896, CYFW, vol. 3, p. 731.

[27]CYFW, vol. 2, pp. 181-3.

[28]CYFW, vol. 1, p. 161.

[29]Ibid.

[30]Liu Chung-t'ao, `Yen Fu fan-yi *Yuan Fu* tzu ching-kuo' (An account on Yen Fu's undertaking of translating *The Wealth of Nations*), in *Hua-tung shih-fa ta-hsueh hsueh-pao* (The Journal of Hua-tung Normal University), 1985, No. 4, pp. 94-6.

[31]Chang Hsia et al ed., *Ch'ing-mo hai-chün shih-liao* (Source materials concerning the Chinese Navy in the late Ch'ing), Peking: hai-yang, 1982, p. 431.

English books from the *pien-fa* bookshop in Shanghai.[32] Thirdly, several magazines were published in China by foreign missionaries at the time, including the well known *Wang-kuo Kung-pao* (The Globe Magazine). Articles published in this magazine included general introductions to Western science, history, religion and social and political theory, as well as discussions of China's current affairs. Martin Bernal's suggestion that Yen Fu might have learned Western social and political theory from the magazine seems probable.[33]

II

China's defeat in the Sino-Japanese war in 1894 was a turning point in Yen Fu's career. The defeat and the brutal treaty imposed by Japan on China startled the Chinese elites. The intellectual climate changed abruptly in the wake of defeat. Awareness of national crisis and the urgency of change became the dominant theme of public opinion.

Immediately after the war, Yen Fu published four important essays in *Chih Pao* in Tientsin: `Lun shih-pien chih chi' (On the speed of world change) (February 4, 1895), `Yuan ch'iang' (The root of strength) (March 4-9, 1895), `P'i Han' (In refutation of Han Yu) (March 13-14, 1895), and `Chiu-wang chueh-lun' (On our salvation) (May 1-8, 1895). These essays portrayed China's situation as one of serious crisis. They argued that China had to make fundamental changes both in culture and in institutions in order to survive in a new world in which only the fittest could survive. He also held that China must follow Western precedents.

To strengthen the arguments of the four essays, Yen Fu translated Thomas

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[32]Yen Fu, `Letter to Chang Yuan-chih', (1899), CYFW, vol. 3, p. 531.

[33]Martin Bernal, *Chinese Socialism to 1907*, London: Cornell University Press, 1976, p. 33.

Huxley's *Evolution and Ethics* into Chinese in the summer and autumn 1896.[34] Yen's translation was less a translation than an abridged summary of the original. He omitted large parts of the original, and added many of his own words to the translation. He also added lengthy notes to express his own ideas. The translation was circulated among some friends before it was formally published in 1898.[35]

The fundamental message Yen Fu wanted to convey by translating Huxley's work was the idea of change. He claimed, following Huxley, that change was the law governing both the natural and the human worlds. He argued that China faced a perilous situation. China could either change fundamentally for the sake of progress, or perish as a people according to the law of evolution as elaborated by Darwin.

Yen Fu's translation of *Evolution and Ethics* had a tremendous influence on Chinese elites. The urgency of national crisis, the possibility of perishing as a nation, and the necessity of radical change conveyed in Yen Fu's translation expressed the general feeling of the country. The book went through more than thirty printings within ten years of its publication.[36] The book was welcomed by intellectuals and officials as providing a means for challenging the conservatives.[37] It was adopted by teachers in some primary and high schools as a textbook.[38] One can hardly imagine another publication in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century China with more readers or greater influence. With the publication of *Evolution and Ethics*, Yen Fu

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[34]*Evolution and Ethics* was originally a lecture delivered by Huxley at the University of Oxford in 1893 as the second of the annual lecture founded by G.J. Romanes. It was published in 1894, together with a `Prolegomena' by Huxley, under the title of *Evolution and Ethics*. See Huxley, *Essays: Ethical and Political*, London: Macmillan, 1904.

[35]The exact date of Yen Fu's translation and publication of *Evolution and Ethics* has long been a subject of controversy. Wu Kuo-i's recent article, *`T'ien-yen Lun Shaanhsi Wei-ching-pen t'an-yen* (Examination of Shaanhsi Wei-ching edition of Yen Fu's translation of *Evolution and Ethics*), provides a detailed account with considerable evidence on this matter. See, *Tang-an yü li-shih* (Archives and history), No. 3, 1990, Peking, pp. 43-50.

[36]Wang Shih, *Yen Fu Chuang* (Biography of Yen Fu), p. 45.

[37]Ibid., p. 43.

[38]Ibid., p. 44.

became famous as `the first person in China to master the Western learning.'[39]

In order to propagate his ideas of reform, Yen Fu joined with several of his friends to publish a newspaper, *Kuo-wen Pao* (National News Daily), in November 1897 in Tientsin. The style of the paper imitated that of *The Times* of London - in addition to daily papers, there was a larger edition every ten days.[40] Many of Yen Fu's important commentaries appeared in the paper as editorials. The paper became `one of the most influential papers in northern China during the reform period'.[41]

The intellectual outcry for reform in the wake of the Sino-Japanese war created a momentum for the reform movement of 1898. Beginning on June 11 1898, the young emperor of the Ch'ing, Kuang-hsu, issued a series of edicts, announcing a wide range of policies aimed at reform. In addition to reforms in military, industrial and commercial policies which, by and large, followed the trend of the Self-strengthening movement, two important aspects of reform were novel. First, the emperor's decrees spelled out innovative measures in cultural and educational reform. The new measures included a radical revamping of the civil-service examination as well as the establishment of a modern university and various primary and secondary schools. Secondly, the emperor's decrees touched upon the matter of political reform, including the reform of government structure and a vague pledge to broaden the political base of government and to `listen to the voice of the people'.[42]

Despite his energetic efforts at propagating ideas of reform and his reputation as `the first person in China to master Western learning', Yen Fu was nevertheless not an active participant in the reform movement of 1898. The only action he took relating to the reform movement was that he was once summoned by the emperor to the court to dispense advice. In response to the emperor, Yen wrote an essay entitled

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[39]K'ang Yu-wei, `Yü Chang Chih-tung hsin' (Letter to Chang Chih-tung), in Chien Po-tsan et al. ed., *Wu-hsu pien-fa* (The reform of 1898), Shanghai, Shen-chou kuo-kuang she, 1953, vol. 2, p. 525.

[40]CYFW, vol. 2, p. 453.

[41]T'ang Chih-chün, *Wu-hsu pien-fa shih* (A History of the reform movement of 1898), Peking: Jen-min, 1984, p. 218.

[42]Ibid., pp. 345-411.

'Ten Thousand Word Memorial to the Emperor' and published it in installments in the *National News Daily* in the early months of 1898.

Two reasons might be given to explain Yen Fu's somewhat passive role in the reform movement. On the one hand, as Schwartz has noted, Yen was by and large a man of ideas rather than a man of action.[43] On the other hand, as will be explored later, he was somehow critical of the policies of the reform movement in spite of his general sympathies with the course of reform.

Although not an activist himself, Yen Fu was dismayed by the conservative coup on September 1898 which cracked down on the reform movement, imprisoning the emperor and executing several reform activists. Within a short period after the coup of the conservatives, Yen composed several poems to express his sorrow about the six martyrs who were executed, his concern for the emperor, and his anger towards the conservatives.[44] One poem reads:

> To search for good government has become a crime,
> To raise talented persons has caused the emperor suffering!
> ...
> The skies over the capital seem to be covered with a pall of darkness.
> No one can dispel my profound depression.[45]

III

The conservative coup of 1898 was the last effort by the traditional conservatives in the court to block meaningful changes in China's social and political systems. Yet it was unable to stop the momentum of change begun by the reform

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[43]Benjamin Schwartz, *In Search of Wealth and Power*, p. 81.

[44]Yen Fu, 'Mourning for Lin Wan-chui' (CYFW, vol. 2, pp. 362-3); 'Ancient Spirit' (vol. 2, p. 363); 'Send off Chen Tai-yi Southward' (vol. 2, p. 363); 'Reflections on August 1898' (vol. 2, p. 414).

[45]CYFW, vol. 2, p. 414.

movement of 1898. Two years later, shocked by the Allied pillage of Peking following the Boxer uprising, the conservatives in the court, who had crushed the reform movement of 1898, began to undertake far reaching reform themselves. The Confucian examination system was modified, and then abolished in 1905; modern schools purveying Western-style learning were established nation-wide; modern armies were established; industry increasingly developed; and above all, the Ch'ing government undertook from the mid-1900s to create representative assemblies and to enact a constitution. All these seemed to suggest, as Mary Wright noted, that `a new society was in the making.'[46]

Nevertheless, for the increasingly radicalized intellectuals and masses, reform came too little and too late. The reform efforts of the Ch'ing court were not able to strengthen imperial rule and prevent a revolution as the Ch'ing government had hoped. They added to the growing revolutionary pressures in society both `by the forces they set in motion and by the resistance they generated - resistance not to their goals but to the only means the imperial government had to achieve them.'[47] The revolutionary movement which emerged in the early 1900s succeeded in overthrowing the rule of Ch'ing in 1911, ending the imperial system which had existed for several thousand years.

During the period from 1898 to 1911, Yen Fu had a very unstable personal life. Immediately following the conservative coup of 1898, came a period of repression and persecution. Despite his passive role in the reform movement, Yen was nevertheless put under great pressure for propagating Western ideas and advocating reform. Shortly after the coup, the *National News Daily*, which Yen edited, was criticized by some conservative officials for propagating alien ideas. As the result, the paper was closed by the government in 1898.[48]

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[46]Mary Clabaugh Wright, `Introduction: the Rising Tide of Change', in Mary Clabaugh Wright ed., *China in Revolution: the First Phase, 1900-1913*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968, pp. 24-32.

[47]Ibid., pp. 29-30.

[48]T'ang Chih-chün, `Yen Fu chuan' (Biography of Yen Fu), in his *Wu-hsu pien-fa jen-wu chuan-kao* (Draft biographies of participants in the reform of 1898), Peking: Chung-hua, 1961, vol. 1, p. 197.

During the Boxer attack on Tientsin, the Peiyang Naval Academy was severely damaged and was closed forever in 1900.[49] In the midst of the rebels' attack, Yen Fu hastily fled Tientsin to Shanghai. During his short stay in Shanghai, he reportedly organized a society for the study of logic, and gave lectures.[50] He was also elected as deputy speaker of the short-lived Shanghai Congress, but apparently was not much involved in the activities of the Congress.[51]

Yen Fu returned to Tientsin in 1901 to be appointed superintendent of the K'ai-p'ing Mining Company, a newly established joint venture between Britain and China. He resigned the position shortly after the appointment, stating that he was not suited for business affairs.[52]

Yen Fu spent the next few years (1902-1905) in Peking as superintendent of a newly-established translation bureau which was affiliated with the Metropolitan University *(Ching-shih Ta-hsueh-t'ang)*, the predecessor of Peking University. He resigned the position in 1905 to be appointed as President of Fu-tan College in Shanghai for a short period. He was then invited to be superintendent of the Anhwei Higher Normal School, a position he held from 1905 to 1907. Frustration over the school's affairs and conflicts with local gentry brought his resignation in 1907.[53] He then became Chief Reviser of the Committee for the Compilation of Technical Terms *(ming-ci kuan chung-chuan)* within the Ministry of Education, a position which he held until the revolution of 1911.

In the radically-changed political environment of the 1900s, Yen Fu held to what can be described as a `middle-course'. On the one hand, he continued to criticize traditional culture and systems and advocate reforms through learning from the West.

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[49]Chang Hsia et al., ed., *Ch'ing-mo hai-chün shih-liao* (Source materials concerning the Chinese Navy in the late Ch'ing), p. 431.

[50]Yen Fu, `Letter to Ts'ao Tien-ch'iu' (1901), in CYFW, vol. 3, p. 566.

[51]Wang Shih, *Yen Fu Chuang* (Biography of Yen Fu), p. 93.

[52]Yen Fu, `Letter to Chang Yuan-chi', (1901), in CYFW, vol. 3, p. 542.

[53]Yen Fu, `Memorandum for resignation of Superintendent of Anhwei Higher Normal School', in *Yen Chi-tao hsien-sheng yi-chu* (Posthumous works of Mr Yen Fu), Singapore: Nan-yang hsueh-hui, 1959, pp. 134-9.

On the other hand, he was increasingly critical of radicals, particularly revolutionaries, and regarded opposition to the growing revolutionary influence as one of his major tasks.

Yen Fu's middle-course was first clearly spelled out in his essay, `Dialogue between Host and Guest', (*chu-k'e p'ing-yi*, 1902). In this essay, he criticized traditional conservative thinking for its refusal to change by learning from the West. He also denounced radicals for their simplistic understanding of Western ideas and systems and for their reckless actions in pursuing a course of radical change. He illustrated his position by sympathizing with the aspirations for change of radicals on the one hand, and by agreeing with the conservative concern for stability on the other. For example, he wrote:

> For a country to progress, both conservative and radical forces are needed, and neither conservative nor radical ideas should be totally dismissed. Without radical ideas, progress is impossible; without conservative ideas, stability cannot be maintained. Making progress and in the meantime maintaining stability is the key for a country to develop in an orderly manner.[54]

To provide a theoretical ground for his middle-course political position, Yen Fu emphasized the importance of what he called `scientific methods' in analyzing social and political issues. By `scientific methods', he meant several distinct and yet related points. To begin with, he argued that political judgment must be based on reason, rather than emotion or abstract principle. The worst thing in politics was to make judgments based on *a priori* moral principles without providing evidence and logical argument, as often happened in the Chinese political tradition. Sound political judgment required a clear understanding of the past, the present and the future of Chinese society, and an understanding of the goals of China's change and the means of reaching the goals.[55] All these required a new type of political study which applied

[54]CYFW, vol. 1, p. 119.

[55]On Yen Fu's discussions of `scientific methods' in studying politics, see his `Political Lectures' (1906), especially the first two lectures. (CYFW, vol. 5, pp. 1241-

evolutionary, historical, comparative and empirical methods.[56] Such a study could be found only in Western social and political sciences.

Yen Fu considered the fault of both traditional conservatives and newly emerged radicals to be their ignorance of scientific knowledge in studying society and politics. Conservatives did not understand progress as the inevitable law of social evolution, while the radicals did not understand evolution to be a gradual process. Both of them had little knowledge of how Western political systems worked.[57] Yen Fu used his personal experience to demonstrate how scientific knowledge could change one's perception of politics:

> [Before I read Spencer's *The Study of Sociology*], I tended to express radical views. I began to realize my error after I had read Spencer's book. I found Spencer's book to contain essence of *The Great Learning* and *The Doctrine of the Mean*, but in a more illustrative form. It demonstrates that investigating matters (*ke-chih*) with a sincere mind is the basis of good governing. When Spencer illustrates a doctrine, he never strikes too far or too short of the mark. To both conservatives and radicals in our country, his book is the best medicine for their problems.[58]

Thus, Yen Fu concluded that in order to change China's social and political institutions, there must first be a change in the pattern of thinking. Chinese people, particularly the elites, must be enlightened by scientific knowledge as developed in the West before any real progress could be made in social and political reform. In his letter to Chang Yuan-ch'i in April 1899, Yen Fu expressed his idea clearly:

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[56]CYFW, vol. 5, p. 1251.

[57]CYFW, vol. 1, p. 123.

[58]CYFW, vol. 1, p. 126.

> Since last autumn, I have closely followed the development of our national affairs and realized that little can be done. If people remain unenlightened, neither conservative nor reform policies will be successful. By contrast, if we have more people, particularly young people, who can really understand the situation of China and the West, then even if the government does nothing, or acts wrongly, our nation will not perish. At worst, it will revive after it declines for a short period. This is why I have given up all other things and pursue only the task of translation.[59]

Yen Fu regarded translating important Western works into Chinese as the most direct way of enlightening the Chinese people. In a letter to Chang Yuan-chi dated April 5 1899, he wrote: `I am now working extremely hard in translating books. ...This is because I pity our people for their ignorance of modern knowledge. I swear to do my best [to enlighten them].'[60] Yen was encouraged by the enormous success of his translation of Huxley's *Evolution and Ethics*. Shortly after its publication, he started a decade long venture in rendering some of what he believed to be the important Western social, political, economical, and philosophical works into Chinese.

The works Yen Fu chose to translate largely fell into three categories. The first was that of Western evolutionary social theories. Throughout his life, Yen demonstrated immense interest in nineteenth-century Western evolutionary theories, and apparently read widely on biological evolution and social evolution. We find in his writings a sketch of the development of evolutionary biology and social science in the West. He discussed dozens of biologists who contributed to the development of evolutionary theory, such as de Lamarck, von Buck, Ernest Haeckel, August Weismann, von Baer, Afred Russell Wallace, Robert Grant, Richard Owen, Thomas

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[59]CYFW, vol. 3, p. 525.

[60]Ibid., p. 527.

Huxley and above all Charles Darwin.[61] He also discussed Western social scientists and historians who were, to various degrees, evolutionists, such as Henry Maine, August Comte and F. K. von Savigny.[62] He even discussed some highly specialized anthropological and sociological works which he thought had applied evolutionary theories in studying societies, such as H. T. Buckle's *A History of Civilization in England* (1857)[63], Edward Westermarck's *The History of Human Marriage* (1891), Johann J. Bachofen's *Mother's Rights* (1861), James G. Frazer's *The Golden Bough* (1890).[64]

More than other evolutionists, Herbert Spencer figured large in Yen Fu's writing. After all, Spencer was `the philosopher' of the whole movement of evolutionary, progressive social science of the late nineteenth century, and `his name, more than any other, symbolized evolutionary social theory for the ordinary reader.'[65] Yen Fu read at least some volumes of Spencer's *System of Synthetic Philosophy*.[66] He expressed his wish several times to translate Spencer's entire *System of Synthetic Philosophy* into Chinese, but wearied of the enormous task.[67] He finally decided to translate *The Study of Sociology* first and hoped to translate some other works of Spencer later, which he did not do.[68] In addition to Spencer's work, Yen also spoke

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[61]CYFW., vol. 5, p. 1325.

[62]CYFW., vol. 1, p. 147; vol. 2, p. 317; vol. 5, p. 1267.

[63]CYFW, vol. 5, p. 1249.

[64]CYFW., vol. 2, pp. 309-19.

[65]J. W. Burrow, *Evolution and Society: a Study in Victorian Social Theory*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966, p. xiv.

[66]Yen stated that some of his comments on the process of biological evolution in his translation of Huxley's *Evolution and Ethics* were derived from Spencer's *The Principles of Biology* (CYFW, vol. 5, p. 1350-3). Yen also mentioned reading Spencer's *The Principles of Ethics*. (CYFW, vol. 5, p. 1325.) Some of Yen Fu's commentaries in his translation of Huxley's *Evolution and Ethics* apparently stemmed from Spencer's *First Principles* (CYFW, vol. 5, pp. 1327-8, Spencer, *First Principles*, pp. 307-396).

[67]CYFW, vol. 3, pp. 507, 527.

[68]Yen started to translate the Spencer's work in 1898 and completed two chapters to

highly of Edward Jenks' *A History of Politics*, and translated it into Chinese.

Alongside his interest in evolutionary theory, Yen Fu had an interest in logic. This interest stemmed from his enthusiasm for scientific methods in analyzing society and politics. He complained that traditional Chinese knowledge lacked conceptual classification and logical consistency.[69] What passed for knowledge in China was only vague declaration without support of either evidence or logical argument.[70] He was convinced that the introduction of Western logic was essential to developing natural and social sciences in China. This belief motivated him to translate Mill's *A System of Logic* into Chinese. He managed to translate the first half of Mill's work during the years from 1900 to 1902 and published it in 1905. He expressed his wish several times to complete the translation but failed to do so, and mentioned the difficulty of translating the work as one reason for his failure. Later, Yen chose a simpler book, W. S. Jevons' *Logic*, to translate into Chinese as a fulfilment of his wish to provide his readers with an introductory book on logic.[71]

Another major category of Yen Fu's translations was Western liberal and democratic theories. Largely due to his experience in Britain, Yen developed a high opinion of Victorian Britain, showing great interest in works of what Hayek called the British liberal tradition.[72]

The first major liberal work Yen Fu choose to translate was Adam Smith's

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be published in *The National News Daily* where he was editor. The translation was interrupted by the Boxer uprising and by his translation of Mill's *On Liberty*. Immediately upon completing the translation of *On Liberty*, he resumed translation of Spencer's work in 1901 and finished the work during the next year. (CYFW, vol. 1, p. 127.)

[69]CYFW, vol. 5, p. 1251.

[70]Ibid.

[71]William Stanley Jevons, *Logic*, New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1897; Yen Fu *Ming-hsueh ch'ien-shuo* (A translation of Jevons' *Logic*), 1908.

[72]Hayek distinguished the English tradition of liberalism from the French one. The former was made explicit mainly by a group of Scottish moral philosophers led by David Hume, Adam Smith, Adam Ferguson, and some Frenchmen like Montesquieu, Benjamin Constant, and above all Tocqueville. (F. A. Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960, pp. 55-6.)

Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations.[73] He first mentioned Smith in 1895 in his essay `The Root of Strength', referring to him as the intellectual fountainhead of Britain's economic prosperity. One year later, Yen Fu began to translate *The Wealth of Nations*, and did not finish the work until 1901.[74]

Even before he finally finished the translation of *The Wealth of Nations*, Yen Fu began his translation of J. S. Mill's *On Liberty* in 1899. He finished the initial draft in 1900, but the manuscript was lost during the Boxer Rebellion when Yen Fu was forced to flee Tientsin to Shanghai. He was pleased that the manuscript was finally found by a Western friend in 1903. He immediately published it with a few minor corrections and changes. He claimed that it was the Chinese people's good fortune that the manuscript of this masterpiece was found, and said that this fact demonstrated that heaven (*t'ien*) did not have the heart to prevent the Chinese people from becoming enlightened.[75]

Another important work which Yen Fu translated was Montesquieu's *The Spirit of the Laws.* Yen probably started the translation in 1900 and finished it in 1909.[76] Before Yen Fu finally finished his translation, another Chinese scholar, Chang Hsiang-wu, published in 1903 his translation of *The Spirit of the Laws* from a Japanese edition.[77] Yen Fu's translation was more widely read than Chang's, probably because Yen Fu's reputation as a master of Western knowledge was greater.

To many of his translations, Yen Fu added thoughtful commentaries. These

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[73]The edition of the Smith's work Yen Fu used is the one edited by James Edwin Thorold Rogers, second edition, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1880, vol. 1-2; see Yen Fu, *Fa-yi* (A translation of Montesquieu's *The Spirit of the Laws*), vol. 1, p. 13.

[74]Liu Chung-t'ao, `Yen Fu fan-yi *Yuan Fu* tzu ching-kuo' (An account on Yen Fu's undertaking of translating *The Wealth of Nations*), pp. 95-6.

[75]Yen Fu, *Chun-chi ch'uan-chieh lun* (A translation of Mill's *On Liberty*), p. viii.

[76]Yen's translation was based upon Thomas Nugent's English edition. His introductory essay on Montesquieu's life was obviously based on the `New Memoir of Montesquieu' in the 1894 edition. (see Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, translated by Thomas Nugent, and revised by J. V. Prichard, London, 1894.)

[77]Hsiung Yuen-tzu, *Chung-kuo chin-tai min-chu ssu-hsiang shih* (A history of democratic thought in modern China), Shanghai: jen-min, 1986, p. 309.

commentaries, together with Yen Fu's numerous essays published during this period, outlined Yen Fu's ideas on wide range of social and political issues.

IV

While Yen Fu's translations and writings earned him great fame and prestige across China, his moderate political position found few followers in a revolutionary era. The Revolution of 1911 finally broke out which overthrew the Ch'ing government and ended the imperial rule which had existed in China for several millennia. Immediately after the revolution, Yen's personal fortune improved. With his reputation as someone well-versed in Western culture and systems, and by virtue of his personal relationship with the president of the republic, Yuan Shih-k'ai, Yen enjoyed considerable prestige in the years following the revolution. He was appointed by Yuan's government as the president of Peking University in February 1912, but differences over policy with the educational administration caused his resignation eight months later.[78] He was then immediately appointed as an advisor to the Yuan Shih-k'ai administration. In 1914, after Yuan dissolved the elected parliament, Yen Fu was appointed a member of the Constitutional Conference (*yueh-fa hui-yi*) which was assigned the task of drafting a new constitution. Shortly after, Yuan appointed Yen Fu as a member of the National Council (*tsai-cheng yuen*), a temporary legislative body replacing the dissolved parliament.[79]

Perhaps the most important political event in which Yen Fu participated during this period was Yuan Shih-k'ai's restoration of the monarchy. Although Yen was reluctantly used by Yuan as a tool of personal ambition, Yen did share the belief

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[78]For a brief account of Yen's presidency of Peking University, see Hsiao Ch'ao-jan, et al., *Pei-ching-ta-hsueh hsiao-shih* (A history of Peking University: 1898-1949), Shanghai: chiao-yü, 1981, pp. 26-30.

[79]On the Yuan Shih-k'ai presidency and his conflicts with the parliament, see Ernest P. Young, 'Politics in the aftermath of Revolution: the Era of Yuan Shih-k'ai', in *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 12, ed. John K. Fairbank, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, pp. 209-55.

that a constitutional monarchy was more desirable than a republic for China at that time.

Following the failure of Yuan's effort to restore the monarchy, China entered `the era of warlords' during which political order collapsed completely and millions of people died from war and famine.[80] It was also the period in which Yen's career was at its lowest ebb. As his disillusion with Chinese politics deepened and as his health deteriorated, he ceased almost all political activities, and rarely published. He still occasionally wrote letters to his closest friends bitterly criticizing warlords, revolutionaries and young radical students whom he held responsible for China's disastrous situation.

Once an optimistic reformer, Yen became extremely depressed in his later years. He stated that there was no hope for China to achieve a state of peace and order in a short time. He was afraid that it would take several decades in which millions of people would lose their lives before the killings stopped.[81] This thought disturbed him deeply. No personal or family joy could relieve the pain of watching the country's situation worsening daily. He wrote to a friend in 1920:

> I always sit in my apartment watching the sky or listening to rain. Sometimes I kill time by staring at the lake. I am now unable to read historical or philosophical works which I so enjoyed earlier. I do not like to talk current political affairs either. My heart is broken, only my body remains alive. My life has become useless![82]

In the new year's eve 1921, Yen wrote a poem to his children which reads:

Our country has deteriorated into a disastrous situation,

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[80]For a brief account of the warlord era, see James E. Sheridan, `The Warlord Era: Politics and Militarism under the Peking Government, 1916-28', in John K. Fairbank ed., *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 12, pp. 284-321.

[81]CYFW, vol. 3, p. 708.

[82]CYFW, vol. 3, p. 714.

When will it be saved?
Once signs of peace could be seen,
Just tell me when you hold a memorial ceremony for me.[83]

Several months later, he died in his home town with his last words in his will to his children. Part of the will reads: `Keep in mind that China will not perish and that our tradition may be reformed, but not abandoned.'[84]

V

One of the obvious questions concerning the study of Yen Fu's thought is whether it was consistent. The received view among Chinese scholars is that Yen Fu's ideas were radical in his early writings and conservative in his later years. In terms of culture, he later gave up his early position as an `all-out Westernizer' and returned to Confucian tradition. Politically speaking he later abandoned his early liberal and democratic beliefs and became a reactionary.[85]

As we have just shown, there is some truth in this assessment. When Yen Fu first published his four essays and the translation of *Evolution and Ethics* in 1895, he was certainly among the most radical intellectuals. He challenged the traditional establishment and advocated comprehensive reform through learning from the West. In his later years, he was counted amongst those conservative, even reactionary, intellectuals who vigorously criticized the fashionable ideas of radical reform or

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[83]CYFW, vol. 2, p. 411.

[84]`Yen Fu's Will', in CYFW, vol. 2, p. 360.

[85] This assessment was first put forward by Chou Chen-fu. Chou divided Yen's thought into three periods: 1) from 1895 when he first published his four essays to 1899 when he translated Mill's *On Liberty*, the period of `all-out Westernizer'; 2) from 1899 to the revolution of 1911, when his thought featured a compromise between tradition and Westernisation; 3) after 1911 he became a reactionary traditionalist and abandoned almost all Western ideas he had once believed. See Chou Chen-fu, *Yen Fu ssu-hsiang shu-p'ing* (A critical interpretation of Yen Fu's thought), Shang-hai, p'ing-ming, 1940, pp. 28, 205, 206. Chou's assessment is generally accepted by Chinese scholars.

revolution.

This picture has more to do with the image of Yen Fu's political ideas in the minds of his contemporaries than changes in his own ideas. In the 1890s, the dominant intellectual tendency was traditional conservatism which stuck to tradition and opposed any change. At the turn of the century, Chinese society, especially public opinion, underwent a rapid shift. By the time Yen Fu died in 1921, the dominant tendency was anti-traditionism and enthusiasm for the most radical Western political ideologies, such as Anarchism and Marxism. In the face of such rapid social changes, Yen Fu's own ideas underwent changes. Yet some of Yen Fu's basic ideas remained unchanged even in his later years.

Thus, in my reconstruction of Yen Fu's thought in the following chapters, I follow Schwartz's argument that there was `a persistence of underlying preoccupation and substantial inner coherence' of Yen Fu's thought.[86] Although I disagree with Schwartz's interpretation of the meaning of this `inner coherence', I will generally treat Yen Fu's thought as a unified entity and explore its inner logic.

[86]Benjamin Schwartz, *In Search of Wealth and Power*, p. 212.

Part One

Tradition and Change

The primary issue confronting Yen Fu when he started to publish his writings and translations in 1895 was the issue of `change' (*pien*). This issue had dominated political debates ever since China's humiliating defeat by the British in the Opium War in 1840, centring on whether or not, or to what extent, China should learn from the West to change its culture and institutions.

The main opposition to change came from what can be called traditional conservatism.[1] Its extreme form was to oppose anything from the West: railways, machinery and weaponry, not to mention social and political institutions.[2] This conservative attitude stemmed from characteristics of a deeply rooted cultural orientation in traditional China. The first was the sacredness of Confucian orthodoxy. Confucianism was formally adopted as the official teaching of the Chinese empire in the second century B. C., and by the emergence of Neo-Confucianism in the twelfth century it gained absolute dominance in Chinese culture.[3] From then on, Confucianism was upheld `as an inviolate body of secular truth', and `guidance for

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[1]The term `conservatism' has been used in the study of modern Chinese intellectual history to refer to two distinct political beliefs. Firstly, it refers to the belief held by traditional Chinese intellectual elites who refused change through learning from the West in the late nineteenth century. (e.g., Mary Clabaugh Wright, *The Last Stand of Chinese Conservatism: the T'ung-chih Restoration*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1957.) Secondly, it refers to various ideas in the early twentieth century which either preferred a gradualist approach to a revolutionary approach in social and political change, or expressed the desire of preserving some elements of tradition. (see, Charlotte Furth, ed. *The Limit of Change: Essays on Conservative Alternatives in Republican China*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976, esp. Benjamin Schwartz, `Notes on Conservatism in General and in China in Particular', and Charlotte Furth, `Culture and Politics in Modern Chinese Conservatism'.) In order to avoid confusion, I refer to the former as `traditional conservatism' (this term was used by Michael Gasster, *Chinese Intellectuals and the Revolution of 1911*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1969, p. vii.) and the latter as conservatism.

[2]For an account of the traditional conservative opposition to learning from the West, see Ch'üan Han-sheng, `Ch'ing-mo fan-tui hsi-hua ti yen-lun' (Anti-Westernization views in the late Ch'ing period), in Chung-kuo wen-hua fu-hsing wei-yuan-hui (the Committee for Chinese Culture Renaissance), ed. *Chung-kuo chin-tai shih lun-chi* (Selected essays on modern Chinese history), Taipei: Commercial Press, vol. 19, 1985, pp. 127-72.

[3]James T.C. Liu, *China Turning inward: Intellectual-Political Changes in the Early Twelfth Century*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988, p. 37.

conducting governmental affairs, regulating the society at large, and the family, and cultivating individual lives.'[4] Thus any deviation from the Confucian orthodoxy, not to mention learning from the West, was regarded as heresy and condemned. `One of the most convenient ways to discredit one's opponent', as Hsiao Kung-chuan observed, was `to accuse him of affiliating with a "heterodox" school thus alienating himself from the "orthodox" school of thought, namely Confucianism.'[5]

Secondly, related to the sacred status of Confucianism, there was a deep rooted Sino-centric view among the elites. For millennia, the Chinese regarded themselves as the most civilized people and others as barbaric. The foundation of such a conviction was the belief that Chinese people followed high moral principles derived from Confucianism which was lacking in barbarous peoples. One of the most powerful and persistent arguments against learning from the West in the half century following the Opium War was that it would lead to `the barbarization of China' (*yi-yi pien-hsia*). For to the mainstream of Chinese intellectuals then, the West had only wealth and power and did not have the high morality the Chinese did.[6]

While this conservative attitude dominated intellectual thinking for a half century, there was nevertheless growing awareness among intellectuals that some kind of change was needed for China to cope with the new situations imposed by Western intrusions. As early as the 1840s, intellectuals such as Kung Tzu-chen (1792-1841) and Wei Yuan (1794-1857) argued for changing policies according to changing circumstances. Wei Yuan in particular argued that `no law can function effectively without change.' He advocated `to learn the superior skills of the barbarians to combat the barbarians'.[7] In the wake of the Second Opium War (1858-

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[4]Ibid.

[5]Hsiao Kung-chuan, *A Modern China and a New World: K'ang Yu-wei, A Reformer and Utopian, 1858-1927*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1975, p. 42.

[6]Yen Fu summarized this dominant traditionalist view of the West: `they [Western countries] have wealth and power, but we have benevolence and righteousness'. (CYFW, vol. 1, p. 46).

[7]For a discussion of the early advocacy of learning from the West, see T'ang Chih-chün, *Wu-hsu pien-fa shih* (A History of the reform movement of 1898), Peking: Jen-min, 1984, pp. 35-46; Hao Yen-p'ing, `Changing Chinese Views of Western Relations, 1840-95', in *Cambridge History of China*, vol. 11, ed. John K. Fairbank

1860), the view that China was facing a greatly `changed situation' (*pien-chu*) and needed to have some changes became more widely shared among intellectuals.[8] Many intellectuals argued that the modernization of the military and the development of industry through science and technology from the West was necessary for China's survival. This belief motivated certain officials to start the `Self-strengthening' program, an effort to modernize the economy and military by adopting Western technology.

To justify Western-oriented change, reform minded intellectuals often felt obliged to camouflage their ideas in a variety of intellectual disguises designed to make the changes appear innocuous. Some argued that the civilization and technology which developed in the modern West in fact originated in China, and therefore learning from the West was simply resuming the development of Chinese civilization and knowledge.[9] Some distinguished `substance' (*t'i*) and `means' (*yung*) to argue that Western science and technology could be adopted as a `means' of preserving China's `substance' - its traditional values, social structure and political institutions.[10]

The most important argument for change before the 1890s, however, was based on the revival of a Legalist notion of `wealth and strength' (*fu-ch'iang*). This notion assumed that establishing a wealthy and powerful Chinese state was far more important than fulfilling any moral goals, particularly in the face of Western threat.[11] It appealed to a kind of nationalistic sentiment to argue that protecting China's `national sovereignty' and expelling foreigners from China justified the adoption of

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and Liu Kwang-ching, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980, pp. 145-53.

[8]Hao Yen-p'ing, `Changing view of Western Relations', in *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 11, p. 156.

[9]Wang Erh-ming, *Wan-Ch'ing cheng-chih ssu-hsiang shih-lun* (Historical essays on political thought in the Late Ch'ing period), Taipei: Hsueh-sheng, 1969, pp. 32-4.

[10]Chang Hao, `Intellectual Change and the Reform Movement, 1890--1898', in *Cambridge History of Modern China*, vol. 11, p. 282.

[11]On various justifications for change, see Paul A. Cohen, *Discovering History in China, American Historical Writing on the Recent Chinese Past*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1984, pp. 29-32.

some Western skills.[12]

While this nationalistic concern with the wealth and strength of the country did legitimize the Self-strengthening programs to some degree, it was nevertheless unable to shake the foundations of the traditional conservatism. Traditional conservatism did not pretend that by sticking to Confucianism China would enhance its wealth and power, yet it insisted that only by following Confucianism could China maintain moral superiority and social harmony. It insisted that raising the people's morality was far more important than technology and weaponry in making a desirable society, and, in the long run, a strong country too. It cited numerous instances in the history of China when barbarous peoples invaded China and defeated China militarily yet ended by being assimilated into Chinese culture because China had the better civilization. In confronting this universalistic and moralistic argument, the argument concerning the wealth and power of the country lacked the moral force strong enough to challenge Confucianism and was always in a defensive position.

As a response to the inability of nationalistic arguments to challenge traditional conservatism, there emerged a new way of arguing for change in 1890s, particularly in the wake of the Sino-Japanese war. One of the features of this new trend was the development of the idea of progress. Intellectuals began to argue for change by referring to certain deterministic laws. K'ang Yu-wei and Yen Fu represented two approaches to this issue. K'ang Yu-wei justified change through a radical reinterpretation of Confucianism by following the tradition of the New Text

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[12]On the emergence of nationalism, including the conception of sovereignty in the 1860s and 1870s, see Hao Yen-p'ing, `Changing view of Western Relations', op. cit., pp. 188-97.

(*chin-wen*) school.[13] The most important innovation of K'ang's revisionist interpretation of Confucianism was that he found an idea of evolution implicit in Confucianism: the doctrine of `the three ages'. In K'ang's interpretation of this doctrine, Confucius saw human history as inexorably developing from the age of disorder (*chu-luan shih*), through the age of approaching peace (*sheng-p'ing shih*), to the final age of universal peace (*t'ai-p'ing shih*). As history progresses through the three ages, institutional changes must inevitably follow.[14]

In contrast to K'ang's Confucian revisionism, Yen Fu held a more radical position.[15] Yen Fu was the first in modern China who abandoned any attempt to camouflage an advocacy of Western-oriented change in intellectual disguise. He directly challenged the authority of the Chinese sages and cited modern Western social and philosophical theories as sources of authority in his argument for change.

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[13]The New Text school was a once dominant school in Confucian interpretation during the West Han period (206-8 A.D.). After the fourth and fifth centuries A.D., however, it was eclipsed by the Old Text school of Confucianism which subsequently dominated Confucian interpretation. The resurgence of the New Text school in the late Ch'ing period can be traced in late eighteenth century and reached its peak in the thought of K'ang Yu-wei, an energetic advocate of reform in the 1890s. (For a brief discussion of the New Text school, see T'ang Chih-chün, *Wu-hsu pien-fa shih* (A History of the reform movement of 1898), pp. 35-6; Frederic Wakeman, Jr., *History and Will: Philosophical Perspectives of Mao Tse-tung's Thought*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973, pp. 101-36.

[14]On K'ang Yu-wei's evolutionary ideas, see Hsü Kuan-san, `K'ang Nan-hai ti san-shih chin-hua shih-kuan (K'ang Yu-wei's evolutionary ideas of the Three Ages), in Chou Yang-shan & et al, ed. *Wan-Ch'ing ssu-hsiang* (The late Ch'ing thought), Taipei: Shih-pao wen-hua, 1980, pp. 535-75; also T'ang Chih-chün, *Wu-hsu pien-fa shih* (A History of the reform movement of 1898), pp. 55-127.

[15]K'ang was called `Confucian revisionist' by Hsiao Kung-chuan, *A Modern China and a New World: K'ang Yu-wei, Reformer and Utopian, 1858-1927*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1975, p. 125.

Chapter II

In Search of Laws of Social Evolution

Yen Fu's argument for change was based first and foremost on his interpretation of nineteenth-century Western evolutionary ideas, ideas which might loosely be grouped under the rubric of Darwinism. Yen Fu was the first to introduce Darwinism systematically into Chinese thought, and by doing so played a significant role in China's intellectual transition at the turn of the century.

The influence of Darwinism as a factor in Yen Fu's thought has been generally acknowledged by existing studies. The nature of this influence, however, invites further discussion. Two weaknesses can be discerned in the studies of Darwinist influences on Yen Fu and on modern Chinese thought as a whole. The first is the confusing usage of the term `social Darwinism'. Secondly, related to this terminological confusion, there has been misinterpretations of the role of Darwinism in Yen Fu's thought and in modern Chinese thought generally.

The term `social Darwinism' has taken an exceptionally wide range of meanings in studies of modern Chinese intellectual history. To take just a few examples, social Darwinism has been used to characterize the efforts of Chinese intellectuals in seeking `a scientific explanation of the workings of politics and society',[1] to describe the views of Chinese intellectuals that `adaptation to the times was a necessity of historical evolution',[2] to identify with the theory of social evolution,[3] and above all to mean ideas of glorifying struggles within or without a society.[4]

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[1]Mary Backus Rankin, *Early Chinese Revolutionaries: Radical Intellectuals in Shanghai and Chekiang, 1902-1911*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971, p. 20.

[2]Charlotte Furth, `Culture and Politics in Modern Chinese Conservatism', in *The Limit of Change: Essays on Conservative Alternatives in Republican China*, ed. Charlotte Furth, p. 25.

[3]Jerome B. Grieder, *Intellectuals and the State in Modern China*, New York: the Free Press, 1981, pp. 245-6; Michael Gasster, *Chinese Intellectuals and the Revolution of 1911*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1969, pp. 61-2.

[4]Benjamin Schwartz, *In Search of Wealth and Power*, esp., pp. 45-7, 54-8; Chang

There is less difficulty in using the term `social Darwinism' in such an inclusive manner, so long as one accepts the variants of `social Darwinism' as James Reeve Pusey has done.[5] Yet in most studies of modern Chinese intellectual history, particularly in Schwartz's study of Yen Fu, this sort of distinction is lacking. On the one hand, Yen Fu's ideas related to those of Darwin or Spencer - ranging from ideas of social evolution, social organism, determinism and the idea of struggle - are discussed by Schwartz under the rubric of social Darwinism. On the other hand, he persistently equated social Darwinism with doctrines glorifying struggle. Consequently, Schwartz interpreted Yen Fu's subscription to Darwinism almost exclusively in terms of Yen's energetic quest for China's state power in order to win the international struggle for existence.[6]

To analyze the influence of Darwinism on Yen Fu in a more precise manner, we need to clarify first the terms `Darwinism' and `social Darwinism'. In biology, Darwinism is comparatively easily understood to refer to evolution - the idea that species change with the passage of time, and more importantly, that the controlling and determining mechanism of biological evolution is `natural selection' or `the preservation of the favoured races in the struggle for life'.[7] There has been considerably less agreement on the use of the term `social Darwinism'. Two broad implications of Darwinism have been applied to social studies. First, the development of Darwinian biology gave an impetus to the emergence of evolutionary sociology

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Hao, *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and Intellectual Transition in China, 1890-1907*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971, esp., pp. 168-77.

[5]In his criticism of Schwartz's view of Yen Fu as a Social Darwinist, Pusey distinguishes two kinds of Social Darwinism: `the ethic of ruthless, uncharitable self-interest' and the attempts of `explaining society in Darwinian terms'. He argues that Yen Fu was a Social Darwinist only in the latter sense, and not in the former one. (James Reeve Pusey, *China and Charles Darwin*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983, pp. 159-60.)

[6]For a summary of this argument, see Benjamin Schwartz, *In Search of Wealth and Power*, esp. chapter xii `Some Implications' (pp. 237-47).

[7]Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species*, (first edition, 1859), London: Penguin Books, 1968.

and anthropology in the late nineteenth century. The ideas of social evolution and social organism fashionable in social science in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century were significantly influenced by Darwinian biology. Nevertheless, scholars are usually wary of labelling those ideas as social Darwinist. As Bannister has argued, the ideas of social evolution and social organism have their origins in ancient Greek thought and many social scientists still adopt them in interpreting social development. He therefore suggested that we distinguish `social organism' and `evolutionism' from social Darwinism[8]

The second implication of Darwinism for social and political studies was to apply the Darwinian notion of `natural selection' to the evolution of human society.[9] This view `holds social evolution to depend upon the operation of the law of natural selection of favourable heritable variants'.[10] This implication of Darwinism is what is generally meant by the term `social Darwinism'. The fundamental characteristic of social Darwinism is, to use David Hume's concepts, that it derives value from fact. That is to say, the various sorts of social Darwinism all `contain or presuppose an attempt to deduce normative prescriptions from premises containing only statements of neutral and uncommitted fact'.[11] Most studies on the influence of social Darwinism in Western nations use `social Darwinism' in this manner. In *Social Darwinism in American Thought*, Richard Hofstadter identified two phases in American social Darwinism: 1) a significant initial stage when social Darwinism was utilized to justify laissez faire economic policy; 2) a less important later stage when group struggles

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[8]Robert Bannister, *Social Darwinism - Science and Myth in Anglo-American Social Thought*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1979, p. 7.

[9]James Allen Rogers, `Darwinism and Social Darwinism', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. xxxiii, (1972), p. 265; Linda L. Clark, *Social Darwinism in France*, University of Alabama Press, 1984, p. 1; C. H. Waddington, `the Human Evolutionary System', in Michael Banton ed., *Darwinism and the Study of Society*, London: Tavistock Publications, p. 63.

[10]R.J. Halliday, `Social Darwinism: a Definition', *Victorian Studies*, No. 4, (1971), p. 389.

[11]Antony G.N. Flew. `The Philosophical Implications of Darwinism', in *Darwin, Marx and Freud*, ed. Arthur Caplan and Bruce Jennings, London: Plenium Press, 1984, p. 121.

among races or nations were portrayed in Darwinian terms.[12] Similarly, Gertrude Himmelfarb observed that social Darwinism became `a portmanteau of nationalism, imperialism, militarism, and dictatorship'.[13] Hans-Gunter Zamartlik argued that social Darwinism was of crucial significance for the origins of Hitler's racism and militarism.[14] Greta Jones described how social Darwinism was used to justify imperialism in nineteenth-century Britain.[15]

The significance of distinguishing the two kinds of Darwinism for the examination of Yen Fu's interpretation of Darwinism is obvious. It allows us to explore Yen Fu's ideas in a more specific manner, and to avoid some confusions as mentioned above. Based on such a distinction, we will be able to treat two aspects of Yen Fu's Darwinism separately: his search for the law of social evolution and his conception of the struggle for existence. Although, as we will see later, these two aspects have certain connections, they nevertheless played distinctive roles in Yen Fu's thought.

The present chapter and the following one will be devoted to analyzing these two aspects of Yen Fu's conception of Darwinism. The present chapter focuses on Yen Fu's conception of evolution, progress and social organism which he found in Darwinism. To avoid confusion, these ideas will not be discussed under the rubric `social Darwinism', but rather will be simply termed ideas of evolution, social organism, etc. I will show that these ideas played a far more important role than hitherto understood in the transition of the traditional Chinese outlook to the progressive and deterministic world view that characterizes modern Chinese thought. The next chapter will be devoted to analyzing Yen Fu's conception of the struggle for

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[12]Richard Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism in American Thought*, revised edition, Boston: Beacon Press, 1955.

[13]Gertrude Himmelfarb, *Darwin and Darwinian Revolution*, New York: Doubleday and Co., 1959, pp. 416-8.

[14]H-G Zamartlik, `Social Darwinism in Germany Seen as a Historical Problem', in Hajo Holborn, *Republic to Reich, the Making of the Nazi Revolution*, translated from German by Ralph Manheim, New York: Pantheon Books, 1972, pp. 436-73.

[15]Greta Jones, *Social Darwinism and English Thought*, Sussex: the Harvester Press, 1980.

existence and natural selection. It will show how Yen Fu used social Darwinism to argue for changes, despite his distaste of social Darwinism as a moral and political theory.

I

Yen Fu opened his first published essay, `On the Speed of World Change', as follows:

> How fast is the world now changing! There has never been such a pace of change since the Ch'in dynasty (221 BC-208 BC). Changes in the world - no one knows from whence they come. For want of a better name, we call it destiny (*yun-hui*). Once destiny is set, not even a sage has any power over it. For even a sage is an entity within destiny and this being so, he obviously cannot change its course![16]

The concept of `destiny' (*yun-hui*) explored here was borrowed from the philosophy of Shao Yung (1011-77), a Neo-Confucian philosopher. The core of Shao's philosophy, as shown by Anne D. Birdwhistell, was his description of natural and social phenomena as manifestations of a single cosmic reality.[17] Shao portrayed natural changes and social changes as following an identical process which evolved from what he called cycle (*yuan*), epoch (*hui*), revolution (*yun*), and generation (*shih*).[18] In the late Ch'ing period, particularly after the 1860s, Shao Yung's conception of *yun-hui* was widely used to suggest that the greatly changed situation

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[16]CYFW, vol. 1, p. 1. The English translation is from James Pusey, *China and Charles Darwin*, p. 51.

[17]Anne D. Birdwhistell, *Transition to Neo-Confucianism: Shao Yung on Knowledge and Symbols of Reality*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989, p. 95.

[18]Ibid., p. 138.

(*pien-chu*) China faced was somehow related to cosmic change.[19]

Yen Fu used Shao Yung's conception of *yun-hui* in the same manner as his intellectual predecessors. By such a conception, he suggested that the human world, like the natural world, is governed by universally applicable laws. Those laws are independent of human consciousness. Men, including `sages', could do nothing to change these laws. All they could do was to understand and follow them.

While Yen Fu credited Shao Yung for recognizing the existence of universally applicable laws, he nevertheless did not believe that Shao Yung, or other Chinese sages, had discovered these laws. Only in the modern West, Yen Fu stated, great progress had been made in uncovering laws governing the natural and human worlds. In the last hundred years, Yen noted, scientists had found that the fundamental law governing the cosmic reality was the law of universal change and evolution. This law was first discovered by biologists. Some great biologists, such as de Lamarck, von Buck, von Baer, Alfred Russell Wallace, Robert Grant, Richard Owen and Thomas Huxley, had demonstrated that living things change from homogeneity to heterogeneity. The creator produced only one basic element and pushed it into motion with great force. The countless beings now in existence were the result of that motion, rather than the result of the creator's direct actions.[20] Charles Darwin, Yen Fu stated, further developed evolutionary biology not only by demonstrating that species change with the passage of time, but more importantly by discovering that the controlling mechanism of biological evolution is `natural selection', the preservation of favoured races in the struggle for existence.[21]

Western scientists had also found that man himself was the result of an evolutionary process. Yen Fu wrote:

> The greatest progress science made in the nineteenth century is the theory that human beings, instead of being creatures of God as held by

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[19]Wang Erh-ming, *Wan-Ch'ing cheng-chih ssu-hsiang shih-lun* (Historical essays on political thought in the Late Ch'ing period), pp. 406-14, 437.

[20]CYFW., vol. 5, p. 1325.

[21]CYFW., vol. 2, p. 309.

> the ancients...are one phase of the evolution of living things....Darwin's *The Descent of Man*,[22] Haeckel's *The Evolution of Man*[23] and Huxley's *Evidences as to Man's Place in Nature*[24] all illustrate that the ape was an ancestor of man.[25]

Moreover, Yen Fu noted that Western scientists had discovered that human society was subject to the same law of evolution. This discovery, he believed, was made by Herbert Spencer. Yen Fu spoke highly of Spencer and portrayed him as the founder of sociology, for which Yen used the term *ch'un-hsueh*, which literally meant the science of the group. In his introduction to his translation of Spencer's *The Study of Sociology*, Yen Fu told his readers, in authoritative tones:

> What is sociology? It is the science of applying scientific methods to investigate changes in society, and to predict its future. ... Spencer was a prominent thinker in Britain. He spent his entire life in exploring the secrets of evolution, and of applying evolutionary theory to the study of society (*min-ch'un*). He did not finish his *System of Synthetic Philosophy* until his seventies. The ideas in this work are so abstruse that few scholars are able to comprehend their essence. He therefore wrote *The Study of Sociology* as an introduction to his whole synthetic philosophy.[26]

Spencer has been often misrepresented as having crudely applied Darwinism

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[22]Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex*, 2 volumes, London: John Murray, second ed. 1874.

[23]Ernest Haeckel, *The Evolution of Man, a Popular Exposition of the Principle Points of Human Ontogeny and Phylogeny*, New York, 1879.

[24]T.H.Huxley, *Evidence as to Man's Place in Nature*, London: Williams & Norgate, 1863.

[25]CYFW, vol. 5, p. 1345.

[26]CYFW, vol. 1, p. 123.

to the study of society.[27] Yen Fu, however, was well aware that the development of Spencer's evolutionary theory was independent of Darwin's.[28] Yen stated that Spencer's idea of evolution 'actually appeared before *The Origin of Species*', and Darwin in fact drew on some of Spencer's ideas in forming his own theories.[29]

The most important contribution of Spencer, Yen Fu wrote, was his development of a synthetic philosophy. It demonstrated the unity of all sciences not only in the sense that the basic logical methods were the same in all fields of scientific inquiry, but also in the sense that the basic processes in all the realms of being were essentially identical: evolution was the universally applicable law governing the inorganic world, the organic world, and the super-organic, i.e. human world. Yen Fu was very much impressed by Spencer's grandiose synthetic philosophy:

> Based on the idea of evolution, Spencer explained the unity of the development of heaven, earth, human beings, physics, psychology and biology. His theory is even more penetrating and profound [than Darwin's]. The first book of his synthetic philosophy utilised the essential principles of physics in order to set up his general theory of evolution.[30] The second book used evolutionary theory to explain biology.[31] The third used evolutionary theory to illustrate psychology.[32] The fourth used evolutionary theory to expound

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[27]For a brief account of this misinterpretation of Spencer, see J.D.Y. Peel, *Herbert Spencer: the Evolution of a Sociologist*, London: Heinemann, 1971, p. 131; J. W. Burrow, *Evolution and Society: A Study in Victorian Social Theory*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966, p. 183.

[28]CYFW., vol. 1, p. 16; vol.2, p. 309; vol.5, p. 1325.

[29]CYFW., vol. 1, p. 16.

[30]Herbert Spencer, *First Principles*, 1862.

[31]Herbert Spencer, *The Principle of Biology*, vol. i, 1864, vol. ii, 1867.

[32]Herbert Spencer, *The Principles of Psychology*, vol. i, 1870; vol. ii, 1872.

sociology.[33] The last book investigated the origins of morality and explained inherent laws of politics and education. It ended with the general rules of preserving and developing a race.[34]

This universal law of evolution discovered by Spencer, Yen Fu believed, was largely absent in traditional Chinese thought with the exception of the *I Ching*.[35] Yen Fu discovered two ideas in the *I Ching* that were related to aspects of Spencer's evolutionary theory. First, the idea of change as the permanent phenomenon of nature as found in the *I Ching* was basically identical with Spencer's idea of universal evolution. Secondly and more importantly, the mechanisms of universal change in Spencer and in the *I Ching* were regarded by Yen Fu as identical. For Spencer, evolution is the process of increasing differentiation (that is to say specialization of function) and integration, by which he meant mutual interdependence of structurally differentiated parts and co-ordination of their functions.[36] For the *I Ching*, the basic pattern of change is union and separation, or closing and opening (*hsi* and *p'i*).[37] Both Spencer and the *I Ching*, for Yen Fu, perceived the `ten thousand things' to have emerged out of the womb of the `Unknowable'. These things then moved by following a definite pattern which Yen described as follows:

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[33]Herbert Spencer, *The Principles of Sociology*, three volumes (1877, 1893, 1896).

[34]CYFW, vol. 5, p. 1325.

[35]CYFW., vol. 5, p. 1320.

[36]Spencer defines evolution as follows: `Evolution is an integration of matter and concomitant dissipation of motion; during which the matter passes from an indefinite, incoherent homogeneity to a definite, coherent heterogeneity; and during which the retained motion undergoes a parallel transformation.' (Herbert Spencer, *First Principles*, p. 396.)

[37]According to the *I Ching*, all changes are the result of movement of two primal forces in the universe: the virile, called the *Yang* (the active element, the male) and the passive, called the *Yin* (the negative element, the female). The basic pattern of change is union and separation, or closing and opening (*hsi* and *p'i*). Following such a pattern, when things grow to their maximum, they must then contract to their minimum. When they contract to their minimum, they must then begin to expand towards their maximum.

> There is contraction, and matter is drawn together. There is dispersion, and force is released. In the beginning there is the Simple. It changes and turns into the variegated and mixed.[38]

The comparison of the *I Ching* with Spencer's evolutionary formula, however, did not lead Yen Fu to overvalue the Chinese classics and belittle the importance of Western evolutionary theory. On the contrary, he dismissed the intellectual tendency which `quoted some similar expression from Chinese classics and then declared Western knowledge had little novelty'.[39] He emphasised that although the Chinese classics contained ideas comparable to certain constituents of modern Western science and philosophy, on the whole, these ideas were `rather simplistic, crude, not systematic and with many mistakes'.[40] Moreover, `although our ancestors made a beginning [in science], the descendants failed to continue their work; the ancestors made great contributions; the descendants failed to develop their essential components.'[41]

Regarding the idea of change, the primary reason why Yen Fu acknowledged Spencer's idea of evolution, rather than simply repeating similar ideas in *I Ching* was that the idea of progress in Spencer's theories met Yen Fu's intellectual needs.

The idea of progress is important in modern Western thought. Particularly during the period of 1750-1900, `the idea of progress reached its zenith in the Western mind in popular as well as scholarly circles. From being one of the important ideas in the West it became the dominant idea.'[42] Two intellectual movements were instrumental for the popularization of the idea of progress. The first was the European

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[38]CYFW., vol. 5, p. 1320. The English translation follows Schwartz, p. 52.

[39]CYFW., vol. 1, p. 52.

[40]Ibid.

[41]CYFW., vol. 5, p. 1320.

[42]Robert Nisbet, *History of the Idea of Progress*, New York: Basic Books, 1980, p. 171.

Enlightenment movement of the eighteenth century. Secondly, and more importantly, evolutionary theory in the nineteenth century greatly strengthened the force of the idea of progress by portraying universal development as a process of progressive evolution. In the later period, `the ablest and most influential development of the argument from evolution to progress was the work of Spencer.'[43]

Spencer's idea of progress is closely related to his notion of differentiation in the process of evolution. The whole organic evolution of Spencer must be seen as a long process of change in which `homogeneity' is replaced everywhere by `heterogeneity'. This change inevitably means progress and perfection. Spencer expressed the idea clearly:

> From the earliest traceable cosmical change down to the latest results of civilization, we shall find that the transformation of the homogeneous into heterogeneous, is that in which progress essentially consists.[44]

In fact Spencer often uses the terms of `evolution', `progress' and `development' interchangeably. For him, evolution is not, as for Darwin, a neutral conception, compatible either with optimism or with pessimism. Rather it means change for the better. Applying to the social realm, this translates into evolution or progress from a monolithic, static, and repressive type of social organization to a diversified, plural, and individualistic type of social organization. Spencer demonstrated that the process of social evolution `is a continuous differentiation of social institutions, and, at a psychological level, a development of altruistic natures in men, until the end-state of history is reached - a heterogeneous society in which men will rejoice in being highly and subtly dependent on one another, will be morally capable of this independence and will find no discrepancy between it and the free

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[43]Ibid., p. 336.

[44]Herbert Spencer, `Progress: Its Law and Cause', quoted from Leslie Sklair *The Sociology of Progress*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970, p. 65.

fulfilment of their own natures.[45]

Spencer's message appealed to Yen Fu. Following Spencer, he simply defined evolution as progress:

> Evolution means continual progress.... In the past hundred years, this idea has spread widely and been combined with the ideas of equality and freedom. Therefore, in all human affairs on the five continents, there is striving for newness, rather than pursuit of the ways of the past.[46]

With Spencer's idea of progress in mind, Yen Fu criticised two ideas in ancient Chinese philosophy: the idea of regression and the idea of cyclical movement in the following terms:

> The greatest and most irreconcilable difference between Chinese and Western thinking is that the Chinese love the past and neglect the present, while the Westerners strive in the present to surpass the past. The Chinese believe that to revolve from order to disorder, from ascension to decline, is the natural way of heaven and human affairs; The Westerners believe in the ultimate principle of all learning and government, in infinite, daily progress, in advance that will not sink into decline, in order that will not revert to disorder.[47]

Yen Fu did not indicate explicitly which schools of ancient Chinese philosophy were guilty of advocating the ideas of cycles or regression. From his writings, however, we can infer that Taoism was the most likely target for his criticism of the idea of regression. Yen Fu once compared some Taoist ideas with Rousseau's belief

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[45]J.D.Y.Peel, *Herbert Spencer: the Evolution of a Sociologist*, London: Heinemann, 1971, p. 153.

[46]CYFW., vol. 5, p. 1241.

[47]CYFW., vol. 1, p. 1. The English translation follows James Pusey, op. cit., p. 51.

that the progress of science and the arts might lead to the regression of people's morality.[48] The idea of cyclical change, criticised by Yen Fu, was expressed in the *I Ching* in the maxim that things will develop in the opposite direction once they have once reached a climax (*p'i-chi t'ai-lai and wu-chi pi-fan*). Yen Fu suggested that this idea would lead to the conclusion that `the fortune of human society would be from prosperity to decline, that the way of heaven follows a cycle, and that countries would alternatively be strong and then weak.'[49] Yen Fu also had Mencius in mind when he criticised the belief that society will evolve from order to disorder. Several years later, another reformist thinker, Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, while advocating the idea of progress, criticised Mencius explicitly for having mistakenly identified spiral change with cyclical change.[50]

Yen Fu's strong belief in progress also stimulated criticism of Huxley's pessimism in the translation and commentary that he wrote to Huxley's *Evolution and Ethics*. In *Evolution and Ethics*, Huxley expressed suspicion of the idea of progress. He disagreed with the fashionable Victorian belief that Darwin's theory provided a scientific sanction for the idea of inevitable progress.[51] He stated:

> The word `evolution', now generally applied to the cosmic process, has had a singular history, and is used in various senses. Taken in popular signification it means progressive development, that is, gradual change from a condition of relative uniformity to one of relative complexity; but its connotation has been widened to include the phenomena of retrogressive metamorphosis, that is, of progress from a condition of relative complexity to one of relative uniformity.[52]

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[48]CYFW., vol. 2, p. 333.

[49]CYFW., vol. 1, p. 29.

[50]Chang Hao, *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and Intellectual Transition in China, 1890-1907*, p. 172.

[51]Cyril Bibby, *T.H. Huxley: Scientist, Humanist and Educator*, London: C.A. Watters and Co., 1959, p. 49.

[52]T.H. Huxley, *Evolution and Ethics*, p. 23.

In defense of Spencer's idea of progress, Yen Fu criticised Huxley's pessimistic perspective. His antipathy to Huxley's disparagement of the idea of progress was clearly expressed when he commented on Huxley's opinions on perfection. Huxley told his audiences in `The Romanes Lecture' (1893):

> We also knew modern speculative optimism, with its perfectibility of the species, reign of peace, and lion and lamb transformation scenes; but one does not hear so much of it as one did forty years ago; indeed, I imagine it is to be met with more commonly at the table of the healthy and wealthy, than in the congregations of the wise. The majority of us, I apprehend, profess neither pessimism nor optimism. We hold that the world is neither so good, nor so bad, as it conceivably might be.[53]

In his commentary following the translated text of this paragraph, Yen Fu judged Huxley's assessment to be rather superficial. He accused Huxley of trying to ingratiate himself with certain shallow scholars by striking an empty compromise between optimism and pessimism.[54] It was mainly because of this that Yen Fu labelled the chapter as the `worst' one in Huxley's work.[55] He denounced Huxley for trying to repudiate Spencer without having studied Spencer's arguments.[56] Yen Fu clearly took up his position on Spencer's side:

> Spencer believes that provided society follows the course of evolution it will improve and eventually progress towards perfection, rather than

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[53]Ibid., p. 49.

[54]CYFW., vol. 5, p. 1391.

[55]Ibid., p. 1392.

[56]Ibid.

deteriorate. This is a very solid argument and hard to repudiate.[57]

Behind Yen Fu's impassioned defense of Spencer's idea of progressive evolution and his criticism of various ideas of retrogression and cyclical change lay his ultimate political concerns. He was interested in the idea of progressive evolution primarily because he found its normative implications could be used to argue for change and reform in China. Yen Fu was surely fascinated by grandiose schemes of universal change and evolution which Spencer and other evolutionists described. He was apparently even more fascinated by its normative implications for human actions. Based on the idea of evolution, Yen Fu advanced a formula which reversed the doctrine of Tung Chung-shu: heaven changes, earth changes, and therefore the way of man (*tao*), which should follow heaven and earth, must also change.[58] No single set of political institutions, social customs and legal systems can apply to all societies and all ages. Various social and political systems, including those developed by the Chinese sages, were designed only to cope with certain concrete situations. When the situation changed, the systems had to be changed accordingly. The problem of China, Yen Fu wrote, lay in people not understanding the necessity of changing outdated systems.[59] If this mentality did not change, he warned, China would never be able to make progress.[60] Chinese people had to understand, Yen Fu argued, that change was not only a necessity required by the universal law, but also the instrument for attaining progress. So long as China followed the universal law of evolution to change its traditional system, Yen stated, it would definitely move towards perfection. He often quoted a Han historian, Ssu-ma Ch'ien, to express his belief: `When difficulties are faced, change is the way to solve them; change will lead to permanent

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[57]Ibid.

[58]Tung Chung-shu (c.179-c.104 B.C.) had an influential notion which reads: `The *t'ien* (heaven, nature) does not change, the *tao* (the way of man) thus does not change'.

[59]CYFW, vol. 1, p. 63.

[60]Quoted from Wang Chü-ch'ang, *Yen Chi-tao nien-p'u* (Chronological Biography of Yen Fu), Shanghai, 1936, p. 29.

progress.'[61]

II

The route by which Yen Fu argued for fundamental changes through evolutionary theory was unusual for China's late Ch'ing period, but the sense of crisis and the idea of change were not novel in his time. From the 1860s, many Chinese intellectuals began to understand the great `changed situation' (*pien-chu*) which China faced. The central questions which concerned them were about the nature of the new situation, what it meant for China, and how China could change in the face of this new situation. As Chang Hao put it, a `crisis of consciousness', namely, `a crisis of order' emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.[62] It was to address this crisis of consciousness that Yen Fu embraced the theories of social evolution which he found in Spencer and other British evolutionary thinkers. These theories provided Yen Fu with a framework for understanding China's current place in historical development and the direction which Chinese reform should follow.

In answering the question of why so many Victorians conceived the major task of social science to be the study of social evolution, J.W. Burrow related the shape of evolutionary social science closely with the need to explain alien peoples and, above all, what were considered to be primitive societies. According to Burrow, the difficulties faced by utilitarianism in explaining `non-rational' conduct, particularly the conduct of alien peoples, produced the intellectual climate of `rejection...of a model of society as a set of rational, calculated relationships entered into for the sake of the advantages they confer' and a climate `in favour of sociological investigation'.[63] The specific attraction of evolutionary social theories, as Burrow suggests, `was that they offered a way of reformulating the essential unity of mankind, while avoiding the current objections to the older theories of human nature everywhere being

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[61]Ibid.

[62]Chang Hao, *Chinese Intellectuals in Crisis*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987, p. 6.

[63]J.W. Burrow, *Evolution and Society*, p. 2.

essentially the same.'[64]

The particular attraction of evolutionary social science to Yen Fu was that it provided him with a `scientific framework' for understanding the nature of his society and its relation to others. As early as 1895, Yen Fu stated that the Western invaders China faced in the nineteenth century differed from the previous invaders in China's history. The earlier invaders, despite their military strength, were less developed than China was at the time of the various invasions. In consequence, although they invaded China, they were ultimately forced to adopt Chinese civilization.[65] By contrast, Westerners, wrote Yen Fu, were superior not only in terms of their military strength but also in their social and political systems as well as their cultures.[66] It was not until his translation of Spencer's *The Study of Sociology*, however, that Yen Fu began to grasp the difference between China and the West in terms of different stages of social evolution.[67]

Spencer's account of social evolution had several dimensions. First, as discussed above, social evolution implied society evolved in a progressive movement towards perfection. Secondly, he characterized the general pattern of social evolution as a unilinear scheme of social development through different stages. These stages were discussed by Spencer under the terms `military society' (or `militant' as Spencer usually said) and `industrial society'. The distinction between military society and industrial society, as Peel suggests, had become a commonplace in societal contrasts since the mid-eighteenth century.[68] It was used by various spokesmen of industrialism, from Adam Smith and Adam Ferguson to August Comte and Saint-Simon to present the industrial revolution as their own cultural victory over a military aristocracy.[69] `Spencer's peculiarity was that he took a two-stage characterization of

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[64]Ibid., p. 98.

[65]CYFW., vol. 1, pp. 10-11.

[66]Ibid., p. 11.

[67]Yen Fu started the translation in 1897 and published it in 1903.

[68]J.D.Y. Peel, *Herbert Spencer: the Evolution of a Sociologist*, p. 192.

[69]Ibid., pp. 192-8.

recent history and turned it into a pattern for general social evolution.'[70] In so doing, Spencer was able to present the history of social development as a process passing through traditional military society to advanced industrial society.

It should be pointed out that the primary aim of Spencer's military-industrial dichotomy was not to shed light on the law underlying the development of human society. Although Spencer was of course concerned with developmental stages, the point was to express his worry about so-called `re-barbarization'.[71] Spencer believed that early Victorian Britain, evincing an aura of prosperity, free trade and international goodwill, seemed to have reached the threshold of the `industrial stage'; the Britain of the 1890s, `jingoistic, militaristic, ingloriously scampering after colonies, seemed to be lapsing into its pristine barbarism'.[72] Because of the *a priori* character of Spencer's distinction between military and industrial stages, his notions of the characteristics of primitive societies were not, on the whole, based on ethnographic evidence, but `were largely derived from middle-class views of the behaviour of groups - their contemporaries, the newly urbanised working class and the landed aristocracy - which they felt were incompatible with industry.'[73]

Yen Fu had high regard for Spencer's contribution to the studies of social evolution. He spoke highly of *The Study of Sociology* for it `employed scientific investigation to examine the change of human society in order to understand the past and predict the future.'[74] From Spencer, Yen Fu came to understand human history as a universal, unilinear scheme of social development through different stages. Every society evolves and progresses toward perfection by advancing from a primitive and `inferior' period towards a `superior' period. This universal pattern of social evolution was understood by Yen Fu as having two implications. On the one hand, the

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[70]Ibid., p. 198.

[71]For a brief discussion of Spencer's idea of `rebarbarization', see David Wiltshire, *The Social and Political Thought of Herbert Spencer*, Oxford University Press, 1978, pp. 343-7.

[72]Ibid., p. 243.

[73]J.D.Y. Peel, *Herbert Spencer: the Evolution of a Sociologist*, p. 198.

[74]Yen Fu: `Introduction' to the translation of *The Study of Sociology*, p. vii.

development of each society can best be historically understood by viewing it as passing through different evolutionary stages. On the other hand, from a comparative standpoint, different races, societies and nations existing contemporaneously could also be divided into different stages of social evolution.

Yen Fu, however, did not adopt Spencer's classification of social evolutionary stages. Nowhere in his writings and translations did Yen Fu mention Spencer's distinction between military and industrial societies. This is anomalous given Yen Fu's enormous indebtedness to Spencer's evolutionary theory. Schwartz suggests that Yen Fu was not impressed by the military-industrial dichotomy because he was preoccupied with the power of the state and did not share Spencer's condemnation of military society.[75] I suspect that Yen Fu was unaware of the dichotomy. In Yen Fu's writings or translations, no evidence suggests that he had ever read Spencer's *The Principles of Sociology* in which the dichotomy of military and industrial societies is discussed.[76] *The Study of Sociology*, with which Yen Fu was most familiar, did not use the terms `military' and `industrial' societies but rather made the more general distinction between `primitive', `uncivilized' societies and `modern', `civilized' societies.[77] Yen Fu was probably not impressed by this distinction because he thought it irrelevant to his understanding of the differences between China and the West. Yen Fu rejected any suggestion that the Chinese people were uncivilized, asserting that `China was a civilized nation, rather than an uncivilized one.'[78] At the same time, Yen Fu also could not conceive that China belonged to the same `civilized' nations as the

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[75]Benjamin Schwartz, *In Search of Wealth and Power*, p. 74.

[76]Although Yen Fu appreciated Spencer's synthetic philosophy and mentioned all volumes of it, his actual reading seems to be limited. Some commentary notes in his translation of *Evolution and Ethics* are apparently abridged quotations from *First Principles* (CYFW., vol. 5, pp. 1327-8) and *The Principles of Biology* (CYFW., vol. 5, pp. 1350-1). He probably also read *The Principles of Ethics* (CYFW., vol. 5, p. 1325). These works of Spencer, however, do not include his discussion of the military-industrial dichotomy.

[77]Herbert Spencer, *The Study of Sociology*, New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1899, pp. 53, 55.

[78]CYFW., vol. 1, p. 105.

West because this view might undermine his argument that China should reform itself based on learning from the West.

To be sure, although the terms, `military society' and `industrial society', are not used in *The Study of Sociology*, one does find in this book the same concerns which are contained in Spencer's distinction between military and industrial societies. In particular, Spencer's criticism of Western colonialism and its barbarous treatments of backward peoples in the name of patriotism which appears in *The Study of Sociology* is along the same line as his general denouncement of militarism. As we will see later, Yen Fu's criticism of nationalism and militarism in early-twentieth-century China was influenced by ideas found in *The Study of Sociology*. Yet with regard to Yen Fu's intellectual quest for understanding China's current position in the human evolutionary process, Spencer's normative discussions provided little for him. What he gleaned from Spencer was the basic notion of universal, unilinear social evolution through different stages. With this new paradigm in hand, Yen Fu sought a more relevant evolutionary theory to satisfy his intellectual needs.

Yen Fu probably considered various conceptions of social evolutionary stages in the West before he finally embraced Edward Jenks' theory. He certainly knew of Adam Smith's division of human society into four broad social and economic types when he translated *The Wealth of Nations*: the stages of hunting, pasture, agriculture, and commerce.[79] Nevertheless, Edward Jenks's *A History of Politics* appealed to him more. Yen began to translate Jenks' work in 1903, three years after its original publication, and published the translation in 1904.

Edward Jenks (1861-1934), was a law professor at University of London, and the author of several widely read law books.[80] He did not, however, play any significant role in the history of social and political thought. His *A History of Politics* was not an innovative work, but rather, as Jenks himself remarked later in his preface to *The State and the Nation*, an expanded version of *A History of Politics*, written to

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[79]Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, Bk V, chapter i, part i, ed. R.H. Campbell & A.S. Skinner, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976, vol. 2, pp. 689-708.

[80]Such as *An Outline of English Local Government*, London: Methnen and Co., 1894; *A Short History of English Law*, London: Methnen and Co., 1912; *The Book of English Law*, London: John Murray, 1928.

popularize evolutionary social science among the mass of the population. Jenks believed that `the study of social and political problems...is no longer a matter exclusively for experts', and `there is a real demand for a popular statement, in simple terms, of the main lines of social and political evolution.'[81]

The main theme of *A History of Politics* reiterated the views of universal, unilinear social evolution of Spencer and many other Western social scientists of the late nineteenth century. As Jenks himself declared later, `this book is avowedly written on evolutionary lines, that is, in the belief that universe is governed by law.'[82] In his book, Jenks described the development of human history as passing from savage (totemistic) society to patriarchal society and finally to the state (political) society. Savage society, the earliest stage of social evolution according to Jenks, was a society with low productive means, totemic group organisation, communal marriage and simple law and institutions.[83] The second stage, patriarchal society, could be divided into two periods, tribal and clannish, but with some common characteristics: `personal, rather than territorial union', `exclusive religion', `communal, instead of individual character' and lack of competition.[84] Modern political society, referred to by Jenks as `the final stage of social development', was exemplified by Britain, France and other Western countries.[85] The main characteristics of this society included a territorial union, universal religion, individual rights, an advanced legal system and political representation.[86]

Jenks drew ideas from various important anthropological works of his time in outlining his scheme of social evolution. Lewis H. Morgan's *Ancient Society* loomed large in his periodization of human history into three stages, and particularly, in his

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[81]Edward Jenks, *The State and the Nation*, New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1919, p. v.

[82]Edward Jenks, *The State and the Nation*, p. 19.

[83]Edward Jenks, *A History of Politics*, New York: Dutton & Co., 1900, Chapter II.

[84]Ibid., Chapter III.

[85]Edward Jenks, *The State and the Nation*, p. 121.

[86]Edward Jenks, *A History of Politics*, Chapter VIII-XIII.

analysis of savage society.[87] As is well known, a most remarkable episode in the reception and subsequent history of Morgan's *Ancient Society* was its adoption as Marxist classic. Based upon *Ancient Society*, Frederick Engels wrote *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* in 1884 to explore the materialistic conception of history.[88] There is no mention of Engels' name in Jenks' book, yet one finds striking similarities between Jenks' ideas and those of Engels. In addition to their division of social evolution into three main epochs - for Jenks, savage, patriarchy and political, for Engels, savage, barbarism and civilization - which by and large accorded with Morgan, one finds almost identical materialistic conceptions of history quite uncharacteristic of Morgan's work.[89] As did Engels, Jenks singled out the domestication of animals as `the great discovery which made patriarchal society possible and inevitable'.[90] Like Engels, Jenks identified the use of iron in agriculture as the most important driving force in the emergence of industry which was in turn instrumental in the transition from patriarchal society to modern political society.[91]

We do not know when Yen Fu first became acquainted with Jenks' *A History of Politics*, but it was probably shortly after its publication. Although, as Yen Fu remarked, the direct aim of his translation was to repudiate Sun Yat-sen's nationalist

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[87]Lewis H. Morgan in his *Ancient Society* (originally published in 1877, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1964) envisioned human history as consisting of three major ethnical periods - savagery, barbarism, and civilization. Morgan's work was among `a short list of useful authorities' at the end of Jenks' *A History of Politics*.

[88]Frederick Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1978.

[89]Bernard Bailyn holds that the prominent notion in Morgan's *Ancient Society* is `the idealist interpretation of cultural development as comparing his materialistic interpretation of history'. See Bernard Bailyn, `Introduction' to *Ancient Society*, p. xxxii.

[90]Edward Jenks, *A History of Politics*, p. 22; for Engels' similar remarks, see *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, p. 26.

[91]Edward Jenks, *A History of Politics*, pp. 62-9; for Engels' similar remarks, see op cit., p. 28.

revolution as the behaviour of a `patriarchal society',[92] there are deeper motives underlying his embrace of Jenks' ideas. Yen Fu found in this little book a sketchy but general outline of the law of historical evolution which did provide him with a framework for understanding the evolutionary level of China. Yen Fu wrote to one of his friends in 1905:

> Thank you for reading my translations. My recent translation of *A History of Politics* has been published by the Commercial Press. By reading this book, you can clearly understand why our nation has not progressed.[93]

Yen Fu was impressed by Jenks' general description of social evolution as a unilinear process passing through three different stages. He remarked that `the ideas of the origin and development of societies presented in *A History of Politics* are irrefutable truth.'[94] The human race, Yen Fu wrote in his introduction to *A History of Politics*, passes through certain stages of growth as the individual passes through `infancy, youth, maturity and old age'.[95] In `examining the stages of evolution of all human societies we find that they all invariably begin in the totemistic stage, pass through a patriarchal stage, and develop into a state stage.'[96]

Edward Jenks made no mention of China in *A History of Politics*, although he sampled various societies ranging from ancient Greek and Roman, to Indian and

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[92]Yen Fu's direct motive for translating Jenks' *A History of Politics* was, according to his own statement, to criticize the anti-Manchu revolution fostered by Sun Yat-sen and his followers as representing a reactionary revival of one of the most patriarchal features of Chinese society - clan or tribal exclusivism. The next chapter contains a more detailed discussion of this view.

[93]CYFW., vol. 3, p. 568.

[94]CYFW., vol. 5, p. 1245.

[95]Yen Fu, *She-hui t'ung-ch'uan* (A translation of Edward Jenks' *A History of Politics*), p. ix.

[96]Ibid.

Islamic societies and natives in Australia and North America in his time.[97] China was neglected because, Yen Fu suggested, `Jenks was not familiar with China.'[98] Yen corrected the omission. China's social development followed the same law of social evolution that Jenks had discovered, he argued. The totemistic stage existed in ancient China and this could be evidenced, Yen Fu suggested, by references in some Chinese classics to the *ming* tribe as the tribe of snake and *pan-ku* as the tribe of dog.[99] The Chinese society at that time was comparable with some contemporary societies, such as those of the Northern American Indians, Australian natives, as well as some ethnic minorities in China.[100] China entered into the patriarchal stage preceding the West. `Our most reliable records show that during the period from Tang and Yu until Chou (around 2,000 B.C-221 B.C.) - a space of over 2000 years - we had already reached a feudal stage, and so-called patriarchal society had already achieved its full development.'[101] Later when things had reached the limits of their actualization, another change began. With the rise of the unified Ch'in empire (221-208 B.C.) under the leadership of Chin Shih Huang-ti, society began the process of transition from a patriarchal stage to a political stage. However, `there has been another two thousand years since Ch'in. With different dynasties and repeated circles of order and disorder, the habits, customs, and thought patterns of the Chinese people have remained patriarchal.'[102] China's advance toward political society was frozen by a vicious circle of dynastic succession.

Yen Fu compared the developmental patterns of China and the West: `For

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[97]Jenks later mentioned China as a `patriarchal society' practising `ancestor worship' in his *The State and the Nation*, p. 61.

[98]Yen Fu, *She-hui t'ung-ch'uan* (A translation of Edward Jenks' *A History of Politics*), p. 15.

[99]Ibid., pp. 3-4.

[100]Ibid., pp. 3, 9.

[101]Ibid., p. ix. The English translation follows Schwartz, *In Search of Wealth and Power*, p. 178.

[102]Yen Fu, *She-hui t'ung-ch'uan* (A translation of Edward Jenks' *A History of Politics*), p. x.

them, the beginning was slow and the end was fast. For us, the beginning was fast yet the end has been slow.'[103] While the West experienced a relatively slow development in its earlier stages, the pace of development during the last two hundred years was breathtaking. Countries like Britain and France, Yen Fu wrote, had already reached the highest stage of social evolution, the political stage.[104] The development of China, however, was unusual. After four millennia of patriarchal society, `China now is still undergoing the transition from patriarchal society to political society with, generally speaking, a seventy per cent patriarchal element and a thirty per cent political element.'[105]

Yen Fu's understanding of Chinese history as a unilinear evolutionary process passing through different stages marked a radical departure from traditional Chinese historical thought. Traditional Chinese historical studies were closely linked to Confucian moral and political ideas. Confucianism regarded politics as a function of the virtues of political leaders; `the evaluation of the performance of past leaders in order to provide present and future leaders with precedents from which to extract political and moral lessons was, therefore, a central function of history.'[106] Since the performance of political leaders was viewed by Confucianism as a matter of success or failure of morality, Confucianism had no need to search for `historical explanation within the inner workings of history'.[107] As a consequence, while Chinese historians achieved high standards in recording historical events, they generally stopped short of

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[103]Ibid., p. ix. The English translation follows Benjamin Schwartz, *In Search of Wealth and Power*, p. 178.

[104]Yen Fu, *She-hui t'ung-ch'uan* (A translation of Edward Jenks' *A History of Politics*), p. ix.

[105]CYFW, vol. 1, p. 151.

[106]Arif Dirlik, *Revolution and History: the Origins of Marxist Historiography in China, 1919-1937*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978, p. 7.

[107]Ibid., p. 8.

`binding events together in a causal nexus and treating them as connected wholes'.[108]

This need of a comprehensive explanation of historical events in traditional Chinese historiography was increasingly felt by Chinese intellectuals in the late nineteenth century as China faced serious national crises. Widespread frustration with Confucian historiography generated `a crisis in Chinese historical consciousness'.[109] Ironically, the very nature of Confucian historiography, particularly its strong moral and political orientation, permitted the perception of national crises to be immediately converted into a sense of crisis in historical consciousness. For Chinese intellectuals, `history was neither a mere pastime nor a scholarly enterprise; it was both functional and practical.'[110] Chinese intellectuals had always viewed historical investigation as a means of finding solutions to current problems. Yet in the late nineteenth century, more and more intellectuals found that Confucian historiography could no longer provide guidance for solving China's problems. They wanted urgently a comprehensive explanation of China's past, the nature of her present crises, and most importantly, the direction of her future development.

Yen Fu's adoption and embellishment of Jenks' interpretation of historical evolution was the earliest in a series of efforts by Chinese intellectuals to respond to the crisis in historical consciousness by introducing what Kuhn calls `paradigm theory' from Western social science. Jenks' analysis of the universal law of historical evolution provided Yen Fu with a framework through which to understand China's past, present and, most importantly, future. With this framework, Yen Fu was able to provide the needed explanation for the nature of China's crises. He demonstrated that the fundamental cause underlying China's weakness in comparison with the West was China's plodding pace in social evolution. China had failed to complete the transition from patriarchal society to modern society, as the West had done. All of the differences between China and the West, Yen Fu suggested, could be understood in

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[108]E. G. Pulleyblank, `Chinese Historical Criticism', in W. G. Beasley and E. G. Pulleyblank ed., *Historians of China and Japan*, Oxford University Press, 1971, p. 152.

[109]Arif Dirlik, *History and Politics*, p. 4.

[110]Ibid., p. 4.

terms of different social evolutionary stages. In the West, individual freedom, democracy, division of power, wealth and strength were the outcomes of a higher degree of social evolution. By the same token, China's despotic political system, lack of individual freedom, poverty, and military weakness were all the consequences of a patriarchal society. He concluded that `China's difficulties are caused by the old patriarchal tradition.'[111]

Following such an analysis, Yen Fu addressed the central issue of his time - the issue of the direction of China's change. Evolutionary theory offered him a new and more `scientific' argument for learning from the West. He showed that human development everywhere follows a universally deterministic process, rendering a historical mandate for every society to follow the process. He also showed that the West had already reached a higher stage in human evolution than China had. Therefore the issue of learning from the West, for Yen Fu, was not an issue of China vs. the West, but an issue of tradition vs modernity. The West represented the future in the social evolution of mankind. Learning from the West was not only something desirable, but a historical imperative.

III

In Yen Fu's recounting and embellishment of the evolutionary theories of Spencer, Jenks and others, one aspect of his ideas differs strikingly from theirs. That was Yen Fu's highly voluntaristic interpretation of evolutionary theory. As we have shown, the entire enterprise of Yen Fu's adoption and propagation of Western evolutionary theories was directed at advocating change. He never hesitated to draw prescriptive conclusions directly from the predominantly descriptive evolutionary theories of Western thinkers. He could easily have turned the idea that everything changes to an argument that China ought to change; he could have argued that China ought to transform into a modern political society simply because the political society is the highest stage of human evolution. Evolutionary theory in Yen Fu was more than a theory of the law governing the natural and human world, but a demand for

[111]CYFW., vol. 1, p. 151.

action and heuristic instruction for action.

To be sure, the evolutionary theories of Spencer and Jenks carried normative implications. The very notion of `progress' indicated evolution to be not only a process of change, but a change incorporating improvement. Nevertheless, the normative implications of the evolutionary theories of Spencer and Jenks were more an optimistic belief in human progress than an immediate demand for action. There was a strong deterministic theme underlying their evolutionary theories. As Peel has shown, Spencer's understanding of evolution bore the stamp of Calvinist determinism which, though not identical with, nevertheless had the potential of leading to fatalism.[112] This potential was demonstrated by Spencer's American disciple Youmans, who on being asked what could be done to alleviate social evils, replied:

> Nothing! You and I can do nothing at all. It's all a matter of evolution. We can only wait for evolution. Perhaps in four or five thousand years evolution may have carried men beyond this state of things. But we can do nothing.[113]

Similar deterministic ideas were also found in Jenks' discussion of the universal law of evolution:

> Man is born into a universe which he is powerless to alter, governed (though he does not know it) by laws which he does not understand; and yet he is dependent on this unalterable, mysterious universe - that we call his environment - for his very existence.[114]

This fatalistic theme in the evolutionary theories of Spencer and Jenks may have tended to a belief, as John Stuart Mill suggested, that certain causes absolutely

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[112]J.D.Y. Peel, *Herbert Spencer: the Evolution of a Sociologist*, p. 103.

[113]Quoted from J.D.Y. Peel, op. cit., p. 102.

[114]Edward Jenks, *The State and the Nation*, p. 2.

control human destiny. 'Not only that whatever is about to happen will be the infallible result of the causes which produce it, ... but moreover that there is no use in struggling against it; that it will happen, however we may strive to prevent it.'[115]

This attitude of non-action, waiting for 'destiny' to reveal its determination was exactly what Yen Fu opposed vigorously. The reason for Yen Fu's acceptance of Western evolutionary theories, as the foregoing suggests, was to argue for changes in China and to illuminate the direction of the changes. In the face of China's national crises, Yen Fu wanted immediate action.

Yen Fu's emphasis on man's action was nowhere more evident than in his translation of and commentaries on Huxley's *Evolution and Ethics*. Yen Fu's motive in translating Huxley's work has been a subject of controversy. Schwartz was puzzled that Yen Fu translated the work which has 'so little in tune with his basic message'. Schwartz perceived Yen's interest in Darwinism to be mainly in the social Darwinian motto of 'survival of the fittest'. Huxley's work, however, represented an attack on the ethic of social Darwinism. Thus Schwartz suggested that Yen Fu's translation of Huxley's *Evolution and Ethics* did not arise from agreement with Huxley's ideas in the book, but that 'the very anti-Spencerian animus of Huxley provides Yen Fu with an excellent opportunity for defending the views of Spencer.'[116]

Schwartz's interpretation has been challenged by James Reeve Pusey. In his recent study, *China and Charles Darwin*, Pusey argued that Yen Fu's translation of Huxley's *Evolution and Ethics* stemmed from his interests in some ideas of the work itself. Yen Fu found Huxley's ideas appealing, Pusey suggested, because they 'gave a call for action - much more clearly than Spencer.'[117] As Pusey observed, Yen Fu drew parallels between Huxley's ideas and Confucian ideas of action, and between Spencer's and the Taoist ideas of no-action. He favoured 'Huxley's Confucian ideas of

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[115]J. S. Mill, *A System of Logic: Ratiocinative and Inductive*, eighth edition, London: Harper & Brothers Publication, 1904, Bk VI, II:3, p. 584.

[116]Benjamin Schwartz, *In Search of Wealth and Power*, pp. 102-3.

[117]James Reeve Pusey, *China and Charles Darwin*, p. 159.

action' over `Spencer's Taoist ideas of non-action'.[118]

Yen Fu's own statement supports Pusey's argument. In his introduction to the translation of *Evolution and Ethics*, Yen Fu spells out clearly his purpose in translating of Huxley's book:

> Huxley's book was intended to remedy the weakness of Spencer's idea of non-action. Some of his views are very similar to those found in our classics. Those ideas are particularly useful in our course of strengthening and preserving our nation. I therefore translated this book last summer.[119]

Yet Pusey seemed to be unaware of the differences between the Huxley vs. Spencer controversy and the Confucian vs. Taoist controversy. He thus failed to see that Yen Fu's venture was more than a simple adoption of Huxley's idea against Spencer's. It represented Yen's effort to address some fundamental issues in traditional Chinese philosophy.

As has been known, the primary concern of the Huxley-Spencer debate was with the relationship between moral and natural principles, an issue which also occupied a significant place in Western moral philosophy. Huxley was dissatisfied with Spencer's evolutionary theory because he considered Spencer to have applied evolutionary theory, a natural principle in Huxley's view, to moral issues. Huxley thought Spencer's fervent belief in laissez-faire to be a simplistic application of biological concepts to social ethics. For Huxley, ethical principles and natural principles were far from mutually compatible. In *Evolution and Ethics*, he showed how social development was advanced through the ideas of justice, law and ethical obligation. He agreed that ethical ideas were the outcome of evolution, but denied that the natural evolutionary process dictated mankind's ethical system. Decrying `the fanatical individualism of our time which attempts to apply the analogy of cosmic nature to society', he argued that the ethical progress of society depends not on

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[118]Ibid., pp. 169-73.

[119]CYFW., vol. 5, p. 1321.

imitating the cosmic progress, but on combating it.[120]

In Yen Fu's interpretation of the Huxley vs. Spencer controversy, the issue in question was no longer about relationship between moral principles and natural principles, rather it was about relationship between human endeavour and determinism. This is evident from the terms Yen used in translating Huxley's original text. Yen Fu translated the English term `ethics' as `the way of man' (*Jen-tao*), or sometimes as `the way of ruling' (*Chih-tao*), and he translated `evolution' as *t'ien-yen*, `the cosmic process' as *t'ien-hsing* and `the way of nature' as *t'ien-tao*. He then explained the Huxley vs. Spencer controversy by the categories of classical Chinese philosophy: `man's relationship to *t'ien* (nature).

The issue of man's relationship to *t'ien* was the most important and most confusing issue in traditional Chinese philosophy. As Yen Fu noted, *t'ien* had been used to express a wide range of meanings in traditional Chinese philosophy:

> The Chinese term *t'ien* is what logic calls an ambiguous term. This ambiguity hinders logical thinking and causes many controversies. It means 1) `God' in its spiritual sense, 2) `universe' in its material sense, 3) `nature' which is independent of human consciousness and has its own logic of casual relations, and 4) `fate'. ... Thus when we speak of *t'ien-yi* (the spirit of Heaven), *t'ien* is used in its first meaning as mentioned above; when we speak of *t'ien-yen* (evolution), *t'ien* is used in its third meaning.[121]

In his discussion of evolutionary theory, Yen Fu generally used *t'ien* to refer to `nature' as an objective existence independent of man's consciousness, but also to imply a quasi-personal all-powerful force which governs the natural world and human world.

Yen Fu discerned three general views on the issue of man's relation to *t'ien* in

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[120]T. H. Huxley, *Evolution and Ethics*, p. 51.

[121]Yen Fu, *Ch'un-hsueh yi-yen* (A translation of Herbert Spencer's *The Study of Sociology*), p. 345.

traditional Chinese philosophy, represented by orthodox Confucianism, Taoism and a particular school of Confucianism represented by Hsun-tzu (fl. 298-238 B.C.).

Among these three schools of thought, Yen Fu was highly critical of orthodox Confucianism, Neo-Confucianism in particular, for its failure to distinguish the way of *t'ien* from the way of man. Yen's subscription to Spencer's ideas of evolution was aimed to show the existence of objective laws independent of man's will. Yen Fu often compared Spencer's ideas to some ideas found in Taoism because he perceived that they all treated nature as being independent of man's consciousness and tried to understand the laws of nature objectively. Yen Fu frequently testified that he was very fond of Taoism because it was similar to modern Western evolutionary theory.[122] As one of his close friends, Hsia Tseng-you, noticed, `Lao-Tzu's work was written 2,400 years ago, and my friend Yen Fu has found it similar to ideas expressed by Darwin, Spencer, and Montesquieu.'[123]

Yen Fu, however, was not entirely satisfied with Spencer's, or Taoist, philosophy. He perceived both Spencer and Taoism to be guilty of advocating man's non-action. Both theories for Yen advocated that the way of man should follow the way of *t'ien*, according to which man could and should do nothing to confront *t'ien*. He frequently associated Spencer's laissez-faire doctrine with the Taoist doctrine of non-action. He wrote, `when Spencer discusses social affairs, his fundamental idea is to let things proceed naturally and to reduce human endeavour to a merely subsidiary role. This is just like Huang-Lao's doctrine of non-action.'[124]

This dissatisfaction directly motivated Yen Fu's turn to another Confucian school, the school represented by Hsun Tzu. Hsun Tzu's views of *t'ien* showed significant Taoist influence in the sense that he accepted the Taoist distinction between that which *t'ien* does and that which man does.[125] Yet Hsun Tzu departed

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[122]CYFW, vol. 3, p. 608; vol. 4, pp. 1077, 1082, 1085, 1087, 1093-4.

[123]Hsia Tseng-yu, `Hou-kuan Yen-shih p'ing-tien Lao-tzu hsü' (Preface to *Lao Tzu* annotated by Yen Fu', in CYFW., vol. 4, p. 1100.

[124]CYFW, vol. 5, p. 1334. Huang-ti and Lao-tzu are regarded as the originators of Taoism.

[125]Hsun Tzu wrote that `nature operates with constant regularity. It does not exist for the sake of (sage-emperor) Yao nor does it cease to exist because of (wicked king)

radically from Taoism by arguing that man should and could use his knowledge of the way of *t'ien* to control *t'ien* for the benefit of man. He wrote:

> Instead regarding *t'ien* as great and admiring it,
> Why not foster it as a thing and regulate it?
> Instead obeying *t'ien* and singing praise to it,
> Why not control *t'ien*'s mandate and use it?
> ...
> Instead of letting things multiply by themselves,
> Why not exercise your ability to transform (and increase) them?
> ...
> Instead of admiring how things come into being,
> Why not do something to bring them to full development?[126]

In his translation of *Evolution and Ethics*, particularly in his original manuscript of the translation, Yen Fu referred to Hsun Tzu in numerous contexts.[127] Although he did not quote the above prose of Hsun Tzu's, he did quote similar remarks from *t'ien-lun* (On Nature) of Liu Yu-hsi (772-842 A.D.), a follower of Hsun Tzu, and linked Liu's idea to Huxley's notion of ethical principle as against natural principle:

Chieh.'(Hsun Tzu, `T'ien-lun' (On Nature), in *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, ed. Chan Wing-tsit, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963, p. 116.)

[126]Chan Wing-tsit, op. cit., p. 122. Chan translated Hsun Tzu's *t'ien* into `Heaven'. It seems to me here *t'ien* means mainly nature. Therefore I leave the term *t'ien* untranslated.

[127]In his original manuscript of the translation of *Evolution and Ethics*, Yen Fu frequently cited ideas in various Chinese classics to convey Huxley's ideas. Later, Yen Fu's mentor and friend Wu Ju-lun suggested that as a translation, direct citation from Chinese sources should be avoided. Following Wu's advice, Yen removed all but a few direct references to Chinese thinkers or works from the text of the translation when it was published. Yet texts of the translation remained largely intact. Yen Fu's original manuscript also appears in CYFW., vol. 5, pp. 1410-76.

> In his *t'ien-lun*, Liu Meng-te (Liu Yu-hsi) wrote: `Every form of being has limits in its capacity. *T'ien* is the greatest being and man is the most developed animal. Something *t'ien* can do is not for man to do, but something man can do is not for *t'ien* to do either. Man makes success by combining his capacity with *t'ien*'s capacity. ...While the capacity of *t'ien* is to produce myriad things in the universe, the capacity of man is to regulate those things.' This view is exactly identical to Huxley's idea that the cosmic process is natural, while regulating this process is man's duty.[128]

This interpretation of Huxley's ideas in the framework of Hsun Tzu's argument for man's active role in controlling natural processes was a rule rather than an exception in Yen Fu's translation of Huxley's *Evolution and Ethics*. A few examples are given below to illustrate how Yen Fu transformed Huxley into Hsun Tzu.

In his *Evolution of Ethics*, Huxley, with Herbert Spencer in mind, told his audience:

> The fanatical individualism of our time attempts to apply the analogy of cosmic nature to society. Once more we have a misapplication of the stoical injunction to follow nature.... Let us understand, once and for all, that the ethical progress of society depends, not on imitating the cosmic process, still less in running away from it, but in combating it.... The history of civilization details the steps by which men have succeeded in building up an artificial world within the cosmos.[129]

Yen Fu's translation, however, differed considerably from the original. The translation explains that `someone' insisted on following the cosmic process, because he failed to realize that human action (*jen-ch'i*) is totally different from the natural

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[128]CYFW., vol. 5, pp. 1472-3.

[129]T. H. Huxley, *Evolution and Ethics*, p. 51.

process (*t'ien-hsing*). 'If we hope to achieve success in social and political affairs', Yen Fu continued, 'we should not follow the cosmic process, nor should we run away from it; rather, we should fight it in order to achieve control over it.'[130] He related this idea to practical matters:

> The reason why European countries are wealthy and strong is because they combat the cosmic process (*t'ien-hsing*) and therefore control nature (*wan-wu*) for human use.... History shows that the doctrine of combating the cosmic process for achieving success is irrefutable.[131]

Another paragraph of Huxley was also reshaped by Yen Fu in the same fashion. In his *Evolution and Ethics*, Huxley regarded nature as a jungle and society as a garden.

> Not only is the state of nature hostile to the state of art of the garden, but the principle of the horticultural process, by which the latter is created and maintained, is antithetic to that of the cosmic process. The characteristic feature of the latter is the intense and unceasing computation of the struggle for existence. The characteristic of the former is the elimination of the struggle, by the removal of the conditions which give rise to it.[132]

In his translation, Yen Fu again emphasised the importance of human action. 'The natural process (*t'ien-hsing*) and human action (*jen-ch'i*) are often antithetic rather than complementary. Success in human action relies on combating the cosmic process.'[133]

Nevertheless, Yen Fu did not consider Huxley's criticism of Spencer to be

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[130]CYFW, vol. 5, p. 1396.

[131]Ibid., p. 1396.

[132]T.H. Huxley, *Evolution and Ethics*, p. 26.

[133]CYFW, vol. 5, p. 1335.

total refutation of Spencer's evolutionary ideas, but rather, a complement to Spencer's ideas. The ideas of Spencer and that of Huxley, for Yen Fu, were two sides of one coin. On the one hand, the way of nature differs from the way of man and Spencer's theory represented the most advanced efforts of scientifically investigating nature and understanding its laws. On the other hand, the purpose of understanding laws of nature was to control natural process based on our knowledge of nature, as exemplified by Huxley's work. Applied to China, Spencer's theory illuminated what we were now in terms of social evolution, while Huxley showed what should be immediately done to change China according to the law of evolution.

Wu Ju-lun, Yen's mentor and author of the preface to Yen Fu's Chinese translation of *Evolution and Ethics*, remarked on Yen Fu's position:

> Huxley completely changed the previous theory by claiming that nature must not be given free reign, but that man must resist nature. Man must resist nature, using his naturally endowed abilities to the full, and ever renewing his efforts so that his country might exist forever and his race never suffer decline. This is what is called struggling for victory over nature. Yet man's struggle with nature, and man's victory over nature are both the result of the working of nature. Thus it is that natural process (*t'ien-hsing*) and human endeavour (*jen-chih*) are part and parcel of evolution.[134]

IV

Some scholars have suggested that there may have been a contradiction between Yen Fu's commitment to determinism on the one hand and his ardent belief in the human capacity to control the objective social law on the other.[135] Yen Fu did not acknowledge this possibility. He was probably unaware of this contradiction

[134]CYFW., vol. 5, p. 1317. This English translation follows James Pusey, *China and Charles Darwin*, p. 172.

[135]James Pusey, *China and Charles Darwin*, pp. 52-3.

because of his highly idealistic interpretation of the law underlining human society. Unlike Jenks and Engels, Yen Fu's interpretation of social evolution contained few elements which could be identified as materialistic. The foundation for his idealistic interpretation of human society and human evolution was his peculiar interpretation of Spencer's theory of social organism.

The organic analogy for society was basic to Spencer's evolutionary sociology. The phrase `social evolution' is only meaningful if biological, human and social development are seen to constitute stages in one broad evolutionary continuum, subject to the same immutable laws and impelled by the same natural forces. The major theme of Spencer's theory of social organism is that `society is a growth and not a manufacture'.[136] In exploring society as a living organism, Spencer drew up long lists of similarities and differences between society and a living organism. The main similarities are: a) both commence as small aggregates and increase in mass; b) both develop a more complex structure as they grow, c) the functionally distinct parts become more interdependent; and d) the life of both is independent of and longer than the life of any of their units.[137]

Yen Fu understood Spencer's theory of social organism through reading *The Study of Sociology*.[138] *The Study of Sociology* provided Yen Fu with tremendous intellectual inspiration. Among them, Spencer's organic analogy for society appealed to Yen Fu deeply. `The theory of social organism which compares and traces an analogy between a society and a biological organism', Yen Fu asserted, `was originated by Spencer'.[139] Such a theory would shed new light on the understanding of human society. Yen Fu wrote:

> When a society is formed, in terms of its structure and functions, in

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[136]Herbert Spencer, *The Principles of Sociology*, vol. iii, p. 321.

[137]J.D.Y. Peel, *Herbert Spencer: the Evolution of a Sociologist*, p. 178.

[138]Yen Fu *Ch'un-hsueh yi-yen* (A translation of Herbert Spencer's *The Study of Sociology*), p. xi.

[139]CYFW., vol. 2, p. 314.

> terms of its capacities, it does not differ from a biological entity. While differing in magnitude, there is a correspondence of organs and functions. Knowing the principles of sustaining the life of my own person, I can also know the principles of survival of the social group. Knowing what makes for long life in the individual, I know what maintains the strong pulse of a country.[140]

Schwartz suggested that the main idea Yen Fu drew from Spencer's social organism was the `notion of China as a society-nation rather than a culture'.[141] `What Yen Fu finds essentially in Spencer is the most graphic possible image of the nation-society, as conceived of in the purest nationalism.' `As a cell of the organism known as China, the duty of the Chinese individual is not to any set of fixed, universal values or fixed beliefs. It is above all a commitment to the survival and growth of the social organism of which he is a part.'[142]

This argument of Schwartz overlooked some peculiar characteristics of Spencer's theory of social organism and misinterpreted Yen Fu's debt to Spencer's theory of social organism. Schwartz's argument follows from the truism that the organic analogy for society implies collectivist political theory and holistic methods of analysis, while societal mechanisms sustain individualism and atomism. Yet as some recent studies of Spencer have shown, Spencer's theory of social organism contained certain peculiar characteristics which distinguished it from that of other theorists of social organism who arrived at a collectivist stance from the metaphor of the social organism.[143] According to these arguments, the organicist position usually involved five distinct but interrelated ideas: a) society is a whole entity; b) the whole is more than the sum of the parts; c) the whole determines the nature of the parts; d) the parts

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[140]CYFW., vol. 1, p. 17.

[141]Benjamin Schwartz, *In Search of Wealth and Power*, p. 56.

[142]Ibid., p. 57.

[143]Particularly J.D.Y. Peel, *Herbert Spencer: the Evolution of a Sociologist*, and David Wiltshire, *The Social and Political Thought of Herbert Spencer*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978.

cannot be understood if considered in isolation from the whole; e) the parts are dynamically interrelated or interdependent.[144] These characteristics necessarily lead to collectivism as evidenced in thinkers such as Hegel and English neo-idealists F.H. Bradley, A.E. Taylor, and J. McTaggart.[145] Spencer's theory of social organism, however, differed from such organic political theory insofar as Spencer greatly appreciated the individual. On the one hand, Spencer insisted that `the society exists for the benefit of its members; not its members for the benefit of the society....The claims of the body politic are nothing in themselves, and become something only in so far as they embody the claims of its component individuals.'[146] On the other hand, Spencer believed that social institutions can be explained by reference to the characters of the constituent individuals. In both biological organism and social organization, Spencer claimed, `given the nature of the units...the nature of the aggregate they form is predetermined.'[147] Walter M. Simon noticed that `Spencer placed an unusually heavy emphasis, obviously, on the *elements* of an organism at the expense of the organism as such.'[148] Because of this characteristic of Spencer's social organism, `there are no serious difficulties over his [Spencer's] combination of the organic analogy with political individualism.'[149]

Yen Fu was well aware of the individualistic tenet in Spencer's theory of social organism. As we will show later in much detail, Yen Fu was impressed by Spencer's distinction between social organism and biological organism and adopted this distinction to argue that the aim of a society should be the happiness of the individual. The acceptance of this idea partially leads Yen Fu to limit the degree to

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[144]D.C. Phillips, `Organism in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. xxxi, No. 3 (July-September, 1970), p. 413.

[145]Ibid., pp. 414-20.

[146]Herbert Spencer, *The Principles of Sociology*, vol. i, (first ed., 1876), reprinted by Otto Zeller: Osnabruck, 1966, pp. 449-50.

[147]Herbert Spencer, *The Study of Sociology*, p. 44.

[148]Walter M. Simon, `Spencer and the "Social Organism"', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. xxi, No. 2 (April-June, 1960), p. 290.

[149]J.D.Y. Peel, *Herbert Spencer: the Evolution of a Sociologist*, p. 185.

which an authoritarian government should infringe on the individual.[150]

An aspect of Spencer's theory of social organism which influenced Yen Fu most was Spencer's analysis of the individual as a component of the social organism. This provided Yen Fu with a new framework for understanding the structure and development of society. As mentioned above, Spencer believed that social institutions were to be explained by reference to the characters of the individuals who comprised them. This view was explained in *The Study of Sociology*. Taking examples from chemistry, physics, biology and society, Spencer asserted that `the character of the aggregate is determined by the character of the units.'[151] He continued:

> Given the structures and consequent instincts of the individuals as we find them, and the community they form will inevitably present certain traits; and no community having such traits can be formed out of individuals having other structures and instincts.[152]

Therefore, Spencer held that the key to understanding the different `tribes and nations, past and present' lay in the analysis of the individuals composing them.[153] He claimed:

> Among societies of all orders and sizes, from the smallest and the rudest up to the largest and most civilized, it has to ascertain what traits there are in common, determined by the common traits of human beings; what less-general traits, distinguishing certain groups of societies, result from traits distinguishing certain races of men; and what peculiarities in each society are traceable to the peculiarities of its

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[150]Yen Fu's argument for individual self-interest based on Spencer's theory of social organism will be discussed in the next chapter.

[151]Herbert Spencer, *The Study of Sociology*, p. 43.

[152]Ibid., p. 45.

[153]Ibid.

members. In every case it has for its subject-matter the growth, development, structure, and functions of the social aggregate, as brought about by the mutual actions of individuals whose natures are partly like those of all men, partly like those of kindred races, partly distinctive.[154]

Yen Fu was impressed by the ideas in *The Study of Sociology*. He thought Spencer's theory a remarkable confirmation of the essence of Chinese thought expounded in such ancient classics as *The Great Learning*.[155] In his essay, `The Root of Strength' *(yuan-ch'iang)* in 1895, he introduced Spencer to Chinese readers as follows:

Spencer...utilized evolutionary theory to explain human relations and civilizations, and calls his theory `the science of society' *(ch'un-hsueh)*....His main ideas are surprisingly similar to those found in *The Great Learning*, namely the ideas of relating sincerity of the will, rectification of mind, cultivation of the personal life and regulation of family with national order and world peace. While the ideas in *The Great Learning* are yet to be fully elaborated and illuminated, Spencer's theory by contrast is exceptionally profound, sophisticated, encyclopedic and abundant. He investigates every matter by applying scientific principles and drawing empirical evidence to discover the primary elements of the matter, and then to indicate its inevitable direction. ... Spencer paid particular attention to analyzing the reasons underlying the weakness or strength of various countries as well as their moral characters. ... [He points out that] what is called society is simply an aggregate of individuals. Without understanding the

[154]Ibid., p. 47.

[155]*The Great Learning* is an important Confucian classic. Chu Hsi assessed it as one of the `Four Classics' (alongside the *Analects*, *Mencius*, and *The Doctrine of the Mean*) for containing the essence of Confucianism. Yen Fu's comparison of Spencer's work to *The Great Learning* is found in CYFW., vol. 1, pp. 6, 126.

elements, it is impossible to understand their aggregation.[156]

For Yen Fu, the primary idea of *The Great Learning* - that social order follows from self-cultivated individuals - is close to Spencer's idea that individual character determines the character of the collectivity. Both Spencer and the Chinese classics showed the basis of a country's strength to lie in its people's characters. In his postscript to his translation of Spencer's book, Yen Fu wrote:

> Generally speaking, everything can be understood in terms of an aggregate and its parts. The aggregate can be called total (*tu-tuo*) and translated as *ch'uan-t'i*, the part can be a called unit (*yu-ni*) and translated as *tan-wei*. A writing brush is total; its hair is a unit. A bowl of rice is total; a grain of rice is a unit. A country is total, an individual is a unit. Societal changes, without exception, all depend on the characters of the individuals involved.[157]

In his essay, `The Root of Strength', Yen Fu analyzed the causes underlying China's backwardness and weakness. He quoted the following paragraph of Spencer's *The Study of Sociology*, without acknowledgement:

> Out of bricks, well burnt, hard, and sharp-angled, lying in a heap by his side, the bricklayer builds, even without mortar, a wall of some height that has considerable stability. With bricks made of bad materials, irregularly burnt, warped, cracked, and many of them broken, he cannot build a dry wall of the same height and stability. The dockyard-labourer, piling cannon-shot, is totally unable to make these spherical masses stand at all as the bricks stand. ...Putting which several facts together, and asking what is the most general truth they

[156]CYFW., vol. 1, p. 6.

[157]Yen Fu, *Ch'un-hsueh yi-yen* (A translation of Herbert Spencer's *The Study of Sociology*), p. xi.

imply, we see it to be this---that the character of the aggregate is determined by the characters of the units.[158]

Yen Fu then argued that the fundamental difference between China's weakness and the West's strength originated not primarily from differences in weapons and technology, even economic or political systems, but rather from different levels of individual character. Individual character was the foundation (*pen*) of a society; the social order and economic and political systems of society are secondary effects (*mo*). The economic prosperity and democratic systems of the West were largely the result of the higher development of their people's characters.[159] It would be impossible, Yen maintained, for a nation like Britain to have a despotic ruler and corrupt officials because the people's character would prevent such a thing from happening.[160] It would also be unlikely that a nation such as Russia could have an enlightened political system, upright officials and a modern economy, because the people's character was undeveloped.[161]

Spencer did not define individual character by any specific properties. His primary aim was to raise the issue of relations between individual character and the character of society in order to argue that `there must be a Social Science expressing the relations between the two, with as much definiteness as the natures of the phenomena permit.'[162] In contrast to Spencer, Yen Fu gave individual character a definite meaning. He defined individual character in terms of the level of an individual's moral, intellectual and physical development, particularly moral and intellectual development. It is possible that Yen Fu borrowed this triad from Huxley, but this triad is much in line with the trend of Confucian ideas, particularly that of

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[158]CYFW, vol. 1, p. 18; Spencer, *The Study of Sociology*, p. 43.

[159]CYFW., vol. 4, pp. 874, 885.

[160]Ibid., p. 893.

[161]CYFW., vol. 2, pp. 498-9.

[162]Herbert Spencer, *The Study of Sociology*, p. 47.

The Great Learning.[163] Confucianism emphasises that the country's peace and prosperity depends, to a great degree, on the moral perfection of both the rulers and the masses. The possession of knowledge is a necessary condition for moral perfection. This is most clearly expressed in *The Great Learning*:

> The Ancients who wished to manifest their clear character to the world would first bring order to their states. Those who wished to bring order to their states would first regulate their families. Those who wished to regulate their families would first cultivate their personal lives. Those who wished to cultivate their personal lives would first rectify their minds. Those who wished to rectify their minds would first make their wills sincere. Those who wished to make their wills sincere would first extend their knowledge. The extension of knowledge consists in the investigation of things.[164]

Confucians often analogously linked people's intellectual and moral characters to social order as roots to a tree, oil to a lamp, water to a fish, fields to a farmer. Preservation or loss of a nation, for a Confucian, depended upon the depth or shallowness of the people's virtue, not upon military strength or weakness.[165] Yen Fu used almost the same analogy as traditional Confucians to describe the essence of the Western theory of government:

> Western political thinkers all regard good government and policies as

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[163]Schwartz suggests that this notion of Yen Fu is derived from Spencer's `famous triad of physical, intellectual and moral energies'.(Schwartz, p. 59) However, he does not indicate where Spencer discusses this `famous triad'. This triad does not appear in *The Study of Sociology*, with which Yen Fu was most familiar. In his *Evolution and Ethics*, Huxley used this triad by saying that `man, physical, intellectual, and moral is much a part of nature'. (p. 25)

[164]Chan Wing-tsit, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, p. 86.

[165]Jerome Grieder, *Intellectuals and the State in Modern China*, New York: the Free Press, 1981, pp. 26-7.

> plants and the people's moral and intellectual level as the soil. When people's moral and intellectual capacities have advanced, ...good government and policies will naturally emerge; and once they emerge, they will not decay. In contrast, [without the advancement of people's moral intellectual abilities] even good government and policies will not last long, they will deteriorate just as the sweet orange of the South degenerates into the sour orange of the North.[166]

The moral and intellectual capacities of the Chinese people, Yen Fu claimed, was far behind that of the West.[167] The primary reason for this, Yen Fu argued, was to be found in Chinese culture. `Our country which has four thousand year-old civilization and ninety thousand miles of good land has deteriorated into a backward country. It has been all caused by our culture!'[168] The only way of revitalizing the Chinese nation was to renovate the people by revitalising the culture.

To revitalise Chinese culture, the first and foremost task for Yen Fu was to adopt the `essence' of modern Western culture which he once defined as `scientifically seeking truth in its knowledge and transforming politics from private business into public business.'[169] These two components of modern Western culture were later articulated by the May Fourth intellectuals as `science and democracy'. The fundamental flaws of Chinese culture, and of Confucianism in particular, when compared to modern Western culture, were that Chinese culture did not develop empirical science in studies of the natural and human world, and that Chinese culture did not develop liberal and democratic ideas as did the modern West. These flaws could only be corrected by drawing upon modern Western culture.

Yen Fu introduced Western ideas with an eye to correcting China's flawed culture. On the one hand, his critique of the traditional educational system, his

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[166]CYFW., vol. 5, p. 1339.

[167]CYFW., vol. 1, pp. 18-9.

[168]CYFW., vol. 1, p. 53.

[169]CYFW., vol. 1, p. 2.

critique of traditional philosophy and science, his enthusiasm for introducing Western logic, `scientific' sociology, economics and political theory all aimed at advancing the scientific knowledge and the intellectual quality of the Chinese people. Yen's nick-name, `the old man of curing ignorance' (*yu-yu lao-jen*), symbolized his devotion to the advancement of the people's intellect. On the other hand, his advocacy of liberal and democratic reform was closely related to efforts at advancing the people's sense of citizenship - the individual possesses certain freedoms and rights in society while he shares in the responsibilities of the community.

In addition to introducing Western knowledge, Yen Fu saw the need to reinterpret or renovate elements of traditional Chinese culture. Unlike the later generation of radical intellectuals associated with the May Fourth movement, Yen Fu had considerable confidence in the vitality of traditional culture. As he put it in one of his commentary notes to Jenks' *A History of Politics*, although Chinese culture after its four thousand years of development had clearly demonstrated an inability to nurture the advanced moral and intellectual character of the people, `it nevertheless has a huge potential for nurturing a great country, and will not perish.'[170] Even in his most radical essay denouncing traditional culture, `On Our Salvation' in 1895, Yen Fu insisted that some important elements in traditional culture are valuable and should be reinterpreted as a part of the new culture which he advocated. This new interpretation, however, was to be undertaken using scientific methods as developed in the modern West. `To understand the essence of our sages' ideas', he wrote, `one has to master Western learning first. Through using Western knowledge to examine the essence of our sages' ideas, one will become convinced of the veracity of the essence of our sages' ideas.'[171]

As did many intellectuals who followed him, Yen Fu aimed to combine the `essence' of modern Western culture and the `good' elements of traditional Chinese culture in order to find an ideal formula for culture to guide the renewal of the people, and ultimately to guide the reformation of society. This notion of an ideal culture for cultural guidance, as Thomas Metzger has observed, was deeply rooted in the Chinese

[170]CYFW., vol. 4, p. 933.

[171]CYFW., vol. 1, p. 49.

cultural tradition. Chinese intellectuals tended to lump social, economic, and political issues together as a cultural issue. They pursued `the right formula of cultural change', and sought a single, correct philosophy for guiding human action.[172]

This highly idealistic and culturalistic interpretation of social structure and social development of Yen Fu, as opposed to the materialistic interpretation of history found in Jenks, was important in Yen Fu's thought for several reasons. First, it provided a theoretical foundation for his reconciliation of determinism and voluntarism. He understood destiny (*Yun-hui*) in terms of the idea that certain results will follow from given causes. Thus, given a certain level of intellectual and moral development of individuals in a society, other aspects of the society were also be determined. Without significant changes in the causes - individual character, the other aspects of a society would not change. The level of individual intellectual and moral development, however, was not totally beyond the control of human beings as it was within the sphere of individual endeavour. As both Spencer and Confucianism showed, man is capable of unlimited perfection.[173] By trying to improve themselves morally and intellectually through a correct cultural formula, individuals could thereby change a society.

Secondly, the idea of the improvement of the individual's moral and intellectual faculties as the foundation of a nation's improvement led Yen Fu to advocate gradual, piecemeal reform rather than radical and violent change. It formed the foundation of Yen Fu's political conservatism as will be shown later. Yen Fu was convinced that good government could not be achieved by simply shaping public policies. Good government could only be possible when people's character was improved substantially. Their character could not be improved overnight. As Yen Fu often quoted from Spencer's *The Study of Sociology*: `human nature is indefinitely

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[172]Thomas Metzger, `Continuities between Modern and Promodern China: Some Neglected Methodological and Substantive Issues', in *Ideas across Cultures*, ed. Paul A. Cohen & Merle Goldman, pp. 263-92.

[173]CYFW, vol. 1, p. 181; Weber perceived the conception of man's unlimited potential of perfection as one of the fundamental features of Confucianism. (Max Weber, *The Religion of China*, p. 228)

modifiable, but no modification of it can be brought about rapidly.'[174] Thus, for Yen Fu, any attempt of changing a society through revolution could be destructive, or at best, in vain. He quoted this paragraph of Spencer's *The Study of Sociology* on several occasions:

> Again and again for three generations has France been showing to the world how impossible it is essentially to change the type of a social structure by any rearrangement wrought out through a revolution. However great the transformation may for a time seem, the original thing re-appears in disguise. ... It needs but to recall the truth exemplified some chapters back, that the properties of the aggregate are determined by the properties of its units, to see at once that so long as the characters remain substantially unchanged in the political organisation which has slowly been evolved by them.[175]

We have shown Yen Fu's ideas of social evolution, progress, and social organism which he adopted from Darwinism and interpreted by referring to various ideas in the Chinese cultural tradition. As Pusey has observed, the manner of Yen Fu's interpretations of 'Western classics', like Sung philosopher Lu Hsiang-shan's interpretation of Confucian classics, was to treat classics as footnotes to his own ideas.[176] In so doing, Yen Fu was able to combine various ideas from different Western thinkers as well as Chinese classics to formulate a synthesis of his own. The primary aim of this synthesis was to reveal the laws which determined the destiny of a society, and illustrate the direction and process of China's changes accordingly. He showed that human society evolves from a lower stage to a higher stage. He demonstrated that the West had already reached the highest stage of human evolution. He displayed an immense confidence in the capacity of man to change society.

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[174]Herbert Spencer, *The Study of Sociology*, p. 108.

[175]Herbert Spencer, *The Study of Sociology*, p. 111; CYFW, vol. 2, p. 308; vol.3, p. 610.

[176]James Reeve Pusey, *China and Charles Darwin*, p. 159.

Finally he showed that the key for social change was to renew individuals through renewal culture. These ideas were to have an enduring influence on the succeeding development of Chinese thought.

Chapter III

Social Darwinism, Nationalism and Universalism

In addition to arguing for change by appealing to the law of social evolution as found in Darwinism, Yen Fu also argued for change by the idea of the struggle for existence and natural selection, ideas we have defined as social Darwinism. One of the most influential notion in Yen Fu's dissemination of Darwinist ideas was the notion of `the survival of the fittest' (*shih-che sheng-ts'un*).

In Schwartz's study, Yen Fu' acceptance of the idea of the struggle for existence was interpreted as the main catalyst for Yen's obsession with the wealth and power of the state - a necessary means in the international struggle for existence.[1] Schwartz perceived Yen's intellectual quest to be reducible to a search for China's national power - an end which justified any means.[2] In this sense, Schwartz suggested, Yen Fu was committed to `social Darwinism and to the ethic implicit in social Darwinism'.[3]

Recently, there has been some revisionist interpretations of Yen Fu's acceptance of the idea of natural selection. In his *China and Charles Darwin*, James Pusey argues that Yen Fu did not accept the `ethic implicit in social Darwinism' - `the ethic of ruthless, uncharitable self-interest that Huxley so abhorred'. Instead, Yen Fu adopted only the rhetoric of social Darwinism as a `fair warning' to argue for change.[4] Even Schwartz, himself, while upholding that Yen Fu was preoccupied with national power, nevertheless avoided the use of `the ethic of social Darwinism' lately. Instead, he stated that Yen Fu only `used the language of social Darwinism'.[5]

Yet this revisionist interpretation has raised more questions than it answered.

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[1]Benjamin Schwartz, *In Search of Wealth and Power*, pp. 237-8.

[2]For a summary of this argument, see Benjamin Schwartz, op. cit., esp. chapter xii `Some Implications' (pp. 237-47).

[3]Ibid., p. 111.

[4]James Pusey, *China and Charles Darwin*, pp. 159-60, 75.

[5]Benjamin Schwartz, `Themes in Intellectual History: May Fourth and after', in *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 12, p. 410.

What is meant by `the language' or `rhetoric' of social Darwinism? Does it mean that Yen Fu believed that the world was a battlefield in which only the fittest would survive, but that he morally deplored such reality? If so, how did the language of social Darwinism serve his argument for change based on learning from the West?

In this chapter, I will offer a new interpretation. I will show that the social Darwinist notion of natural selection functioned in Yen Fu not merely as `a fair warning'. Rather, it carried a normative implication. However, this normative implication was less nationalistic than universalistic. Unquestionably, one of Yen's persistent concerns was China's survival as a nation. Yet he saw the survival of China not simply as an issue of whether China could enhance its wealth and power, but as an issue of whether China could enter the mainstream of the historical evolution of mankind. In this sense, Yen Fu's acceptance of the social Darwinian doctrine of the struggle for existence and natural selection was part of his universalistic, deterministic and evolutionary vision of human development which we have explored in the last chapter.

Several factors probably contributed to Schwartz's and Pusey's failure to attend to this universalistic aspect of Yen Fu's views on social Darwinism. First, their interpretations of Yen Fu's views on social Darwinism were based heavily on Yen Fu's translation of Huxley's *Evolution and Ethics*, as well as his four essays in 1895, which Schwartz treated as `a sort of prolegomenon' to the whole of Yen Fu's thought.[6] They paid little attention to Yen Fu's numerous essays criticising the rising tide of nationalism and the ethic of social Darwinism in the 1900s, and particularly after the outbreak of the First World War. Secondly, in their analyses of Yen Fu's interpretation of social Darwinism, they misinterpreted some critical Chinese terms, such as those for `struggle' and `fittest' and therefore missed their moralist connotations.

Thus the following discussion will, firstly, reexamine the meaning of Yen Fu's acceptance of the social Darwinian doctrine of `the struggle for existence' in his writings and translations between 1895 and 1898. Secondly, it will examine Yen Fu's criticism of nationalism as well his repudiation of the doctrine of might-as-right in his

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[6]Benjamin Schwartz, *In Search of Wealth and Power*, p. 43.

writings in the 1900s. Thirdly, it will show how Yen Fu's faith in universalistic morality led to his disillusion with the modern West after the outbreak of the First World War.

I

Yen Fu's acceptance of the social Darwinian doctrine of `the struggle for existence' was primarily found in his four important essays of 1895 and his translation of Huxley's *Evolution and Ethics*. The years immediately following the Sino-Japanese war were critical to the protracted debate begun in the 1840s about whether China should fundamentally change its culture and institutions by learning from the West. Yen Fu's writings and translations during this period were focused on addressing the issue of change. On the one hand, as we have shown, he argued that change was the universal law and instrument of progress. On the other hand, he sternly warned his countrymen that failure to undertake fundamental changes would lead to the end of both China as an independent nation and the Chinese as a people. This grave possibility was revealed by a Darwinian law which governed both the natural and human worlds. According to this law,

> Living things struggle among themselves in order to survive. *T'ien* selects among them and preserves the fittest species.[7] It is his [Darwin's] view that humans and living things are born within a given space and together feed on the environment and on the benefits of *t'ien*. They come into conflict with each other. Peoples and living things struggle for survival. At first, species struggle with species; then as men gradually progress, there is a struggle between one social group and another. The weak invariably become the prey of the strong, and the stupid invariably become subservient to the clever.[8]

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[7]The ideograph *t'ien* is again very ambiguous. It basically means `nature', but also implies a quasi-personal almighty force which governs the natural world and human world.

[8]CYFW., vol. 1, p. 16, the English translation follows Schwartz, *In Search of*

Darwin's idea carries two messages for Yen Fu: the idea of the struggle for existence, and the idea of natural selection (or to use Yen Fu's phrase, *t'ien*'s selection). In his notion of the struggle for existence, Yen Fu tried to convey the idea that the world was not a benevolent place, but a battlefield. In both the natural world and the human world, he suggested, *t'ien* produced enormous numbers of creatures and human beings, yet offered limited means for their survival. He pointed out that by Darwin's calculation a couple of elephants, the least prolific of animals, would reproduce nineteen millions in 740 years.[9] In the human world, according to Thomas Malthus, population increased in geometric progression while material production increased only in arithmetic progression.[10] Consequently, wrote Yen Fu, `there are far too many creatures existing in the world, and only a small portion of them will be able to survive.'[11] They therefore engage in endless struggles (*cheng*) to obtain the necessary yet scarce means for sustaining their own survival.[12]

Yen Fu's notion of `struggle' was a highly confusing one. It contained at least two implications. First, as has been generally understood, he meant by `struggle' conflict or contest between species or peoples in which the stronger emerged as the surviving winner, the weak as the loser doomed to perish. As Yen Fu stated clearly, `every species strives hard to preserve its race through vicious war with others. The weak will perish while the strong will survive.'[13]

Another implication of Yen Fu's notion of `struggle' meant less a conflict or contest between species and more an endeavour by a species or a people to be `fitter'.

Wealth and Power, pp. 45-6.

[9]CYFW., vol. 5, pp. 1329-30; for Darwin's description of reproduction of the elephant, see Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species*, London: Penguin Books, 1968, pp. 118-9.

[10]CYFW., vol. 5, p. 1329.

[11]Ibid.

[12]Ibid., p. 1331.

[13]Ibid., p. 1323.

'Fitter' in both natural and human worlds meant, as Yen Fu learned from Huxley, 'those creatures which are best adapted to the conditions which at any period obtain.'[14] Yen Fu spelled out the meaning of this notion clearly in his essay 'The Root of Strength':

> Those which have the capacity for maintaining self-existence and having descendants are those which are strong, swift, clever, and thereby best adapted to the external environment at any period. ... If a species which is accustomed to leisure is put in an environment where it has to labour, or if a species which is accustomed to live in mountains is forced to live in marshlands, it will not be able to reproduce and the species will naturally perish. This is what the struggle for existence means.[15]

In this latter sense, as Yen Fu remarked, 'the struggle for existence does not mean to kill others by tooth and claw'.[16] 'Struggle without contest between species is the ultimate form of struggle.'[17]

The struggle to be 'fitter' for Yen Fu was closely related to the notion of natural selection for which Yen Fu used *t'ien*'s selection. To be 'fitter', Yen Fu suggested, meant to be selected by *t'ien* as its 'favourite' (*t'ien chih suo-hou*).[18] Yen Fu considered *t'ien* much as an omnipotent regulator of natural and human worlds as in Confucianism. Unlike Confucianism, however, the Darwinian *t'ien* was understood as not caring much about peace and harmony, but about progress. Unlike the Confucian *t'ien* which is benevolent (protecting the virtuous and rewarding the

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[14]Thomas Huxley, *Evolution and Ethics*, p. 23; Yen Fu's translation is found in CYFW., vol. 5, p. 1324.

[15]CYFW., vol. 1, pp. 5-6.

[16]Ibid.

[17]CYFW., vol. 5, p. 1324.

[18]Ibid.

virtuous without eliminating the virtueless[19]), Darwinian *t'ien* is merciless. The sole purpose of Darwinian *t'ien* is to promote progress in the natural and human worlds. To that purpose, it mercilessly eliminates the unfit. In his commentary on *Lao Tzu*, Yen Fu repeatedly emphasised one idea of Lao Tzu, suggesting it as similar to the essence of Darwin's doctrine: `Heaven and earth are not benevolent, they treat a thousand things simply as a dog or a pig; Sages are not benevolent, they treat human beings as dogs and pigs.'[20] In his essay titled `On Preserving Our Race' in 1898, Yen Fu even went so far as to argue that, according to Darwinian principles, the most important function of *t'ien* is to destroy rather than to create. He wrote:

> It has been a classic Chinese notion that the way of *t'ien* is to create. We Chinese have never been able to understand why the creator creates thousands upon thousands of things. ...Now we have learned the opposite: *t'ien* likes to destroy. Only because it likes to destroy, it has to create. The reason for creation is to prepare the objects to destroy.[21]

Such an interpretation of the Darwinian notion of the struggle for existence and natural selection enabled Yen Fu to demonstrate how progressive evolution in the natural and human world occurs. For Yen Fu `fitter' always meant `good' (*yu*), and `unfitted' meant bad (*lueh*). Every creature and human being struggles to be fitter. `*T'ien* selects those best fitted to survive'.[22] *T'ien*'s selection is an interminable process. `After it selects some creatures to survive, it will again command those survivors to contend, and then it selects again. By this interminable process of

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[19]The most insightful study of the notion of *t'ien* in Confucianism is found in Robert Eno, *The Confucian Creation of Heaven*, State University of New York Press, 1990.

[20]CYFW., vol. 4, p. 1077.

[21]CYFW., vol. 1, pp. 86-7.

[22]CYFW., vol. 5, p. 1324.

contention and selection, change occurs.'[23]

Yen Fu's image of endless struggle in the natural and human worlds contrasts with the Confucian perception of natural order and human order. One of the fundamental beliefs of Confucianism, as Weber saw it, was the `optimistic conception of cosmic harmony'.[24] For Confucianists, both in the natural world and in the human world,

> Harmony is the basic state and the underlying structure or reality whereas conflict does not have roots in reality, but rather represents an order of unnatural imbalance or disorder of no lasting significance.[25]

By portraying struggle as a universal phenomenon and mechanism for progress in the human and natural worlds, Yen Fu diverges significantly from this Confucian perception of the world. He is one of the earliest modern Chinese intellectuals to see human conflict and struggle as a positive element in human progress.[26]

As Pusey observes, the main emphasis in Yen Fu's adoption of the Darwinian notion of struggle was not struggle within a society, but struggle between different

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[23]Ibid.

[24]Max Weber, *The Religion of China*, tr. by Hans H. Gerth, New York: The Free Press, 1964, p. 28.

[25]Ch'eng Chung-ying, *New Dimensions of Confucian and Neo-Confucian Philosophy*, New York: State University of New York Press, 1991, p. 188.

[26]Donald J. Munro perceives the replacement of the notion of harmony with conflicts and struggle as one of the most significant departures from the tradition in modern Chinese thought. (see his, *The Concept of Man in Early China*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1969, pp. 160-2.) Glorification of struggle reached its peak later in communist ideology, particularly in the thought of Mao Tse-tung. Mao viewed both intrasocietal struggles, such as class struggle, and intersocietal struggle, such as anti-imperialist struggles, as an engine of progress. (For Mao's notions of `conflict' and `struggle', see John Bryan Starr, *Continuing the Revolution: the Political Thought of Mao*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979, esp. Chapter One: `On Conflict', pp. 3-45.)

societies or nations.[27] Far from viewing intrasocietal struggle as the engine of social progress, Yen Fu's vision of an ideal society, as we will see later, was shaped, perhaps unconsciously, by the Confucian ideal of a harmonious society. He interpreted Western liberal and democratic systems as a means of achieving a harmonious society.[28]

The primary point Yen Fu wanted to make with the Darwinian notion of the struggle for existence was that the world was a battlefield between different nations. His own phrase was, `the world today is similar to our Spring and Autumn and Warring States period, yet has much intensive competition between different nations.'[29]

However, Yen Fu was not the first person in modern China to portray the modern world as a battlefield of struggle. Before Darwin's name became known in China or in the West, Chinese intellectuals had already perceived a world dominated by struggles in which strength inevitably overpowered weakness. This law was understood through the experience of China and other weak countries in dealing with the Western powers.[30] By the 1860s, the idea that the modern world was a battlefield comparable to China's early Warring States period had become widely shared among intellectuals. As a famous intellectual in the Self-strengthening movement, Wang T'ao, put it (around 1873-1874): `The general situation in Europe today is no different from that which prevailed in earlier times in the Spring and Autumn and Warring states period.'[31] This understanding partially motivated the Self-strengthening

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[27]James Pusey, *China and Charles Darwin*, p. 64.

[28]On Yen Fu's adoption of Western liberal and democratic systems as the means of achieving social harmony, see chapter v and vi of this thesis.

[29]CYFW., vol. 2, p. 261. The period of Spring and Autumn (722-481 B.C.) and Warring States (480-221 B.C.) were the periods before China became a unified empire when various states fought with each other to gain domination. Some Chinese scholars liked to compare modern world order with this period in Chinese history.

[30]James Pusey, *China and Charles Darwin*, pp. 5-7.

[31]Paul A. Cohen, *Between Tradition and Modernity: Wang T'ao and Reform in the Late Ch'ing China*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987, p. 93.

movement of the 1860s.[32]

Yen Fu excelled over his predecessors by first `scientifically' proving their arguments and giving theoretical expression to the vague ideas of many intellectuals. Secondly and more importantly, Yen Fu emphasized that the struggle for existence and natural selection were universal laws which none could escape. He ridiculed both the Ch'ing government's `closed door' policy which preceded the 1840s and its subsequent efforts to drive foreigners out of China. These represented attempts to isolate itself and avoid the struggle for existence.[33] The leaders had not understood, Yen Fu charged, that the universal phenomenon of the struggle for existence is determined by *t'ien*, not by man. `Once the workings of heaven and earth have started, no one can stop them. Those officials in their selfishness may try to stop them, but no one has ever succeeded.'[34] If a nation or race tries to isolate itself from competition, it will achieve nothing and on the contrary hinder its own progress. As geologists had discovered, Yen Fu wrote, the plants and animals in Australia were all one stage behind those in other continents due to its geographical isolation. They would all be eliminated when the door of Australia opened to competition from other continents.[35]

The powerful force of *t'ien*, Yen Fu suggested, had been already demonstrated by recent history. There were several great races on the earth: the yellow, the white, the brown, the black and the red. The red had already been eliminated and the black race had become slaves.[36] `The reason why the yellow will be eliminated later than the black, red and brown is not because it has intellect to match the White race. It is only because the yellow race occupies a larger geographic territory and has a bigger

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[32]James Pusey, *China and Charles Darwin*, p. 6.

[33]CYFW., vol. 1, p. 3.

[34]Ibid.; part of the translation is from James Pusey, *China and Charles Darwin*, p. 56.

[35]CYFW., vol. 1, p. 81.

[36]Ibid., pp. 21-2.

population. Therefore it takes time for it to be eliminated.'[37]

In the face of this danger of elimination, there was no choice but for China to change. China could either change herself or be forcibly changed by other powers.[38] As China had not yet been exterminated, and `the sovereign power of China has not yet been completely lost', Yen Fu argued, `it is still possible to renovate our country if we strive to do so'.[39] If China failed to take this last opportunity, then the Chinese as a people would be exterminated. This did not necessarily mean that all Chinese would be killed, but it at least meant enslavement by other peoples.

> They will be the sovereign; we will be the subjects; they will be the strong; we will be the weak; while we plant, they will own the fruits; while we work, they will enjoy leisure time.... They will look down upon us as a lower people, and they will regard our race as undeserving of autonomy. They will, therefore, bind us and enslave us.[40]

To be enslaved, Yen Fu argued, is no better than dying. `People know that there are times when to live is worse than to die, to survive is worse than to perish. The worth of life depends entirely on whether one has honour and dignity or humiliation and disrespect, or in other words, whether one has freedom.'[41] Honour, dignity and freedom are important both to the individual and to the nation. `For the individual, freedom is esteemed. For the nation, independence is esteemed.'[42] That China might not be able to survive as an independent country was Yen's gravest nightmare. The period in which Yen Fu began his writing and translating was a

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[37]Ibid., p. 87.

[38]Ibid., p. 50.

[39]CYFW., vol. 3, p. 541.

[40]CYFW., vol. 1, p. 23.

[41]Ibid.

[42]Ibid., p. 17.

critical one in modern Chinese history. In the wake of China's defeat by Japan in the 1894-1895 war, China faced the serious threat of `partition of the country'.[43] In a letter to Wu Ju-Lun in 1897, Yen Fu analyzed this `threat of partition' China faced, and he expressed his feelings: `How sad it is! How sad it is! Whenever this thought occurs to me in my dream, I always awaken and weep.'[44]

The only way for China to survive, Yen Fu argued, was to strive to become fitter. He here called upon strong voluntary efforts. His notion that one can become fit is closer to Lamarck's ideas than to Darwin's. For Lamarck, hereditary changes occurred through the organism's efforts to adapt itself to changed conditions in its environment. By contrast, Darwin did not offer a species the possibility of the `struggle' for its own survival. `Natural selection' in Darwin's term operated through a random and fortuitous process over which an individual species has no control.[45]

What did Yen Fu mean by referring to a `fit' country? The conventional view is that a `fit' country meant one possessing wealth and power and thereby the strength to overpower those less wealthy and powerful. But this interpretation is simply too narrow to cover all of Yen Fu's concerns. A fit country, as a fit species, meant for Yen Fu a country which could best adapt to new conditions. Although during this period between 1895 and 1898 Yen Fu had not yet developed a full-fledged evolutionary theory, his idea of progressive evolution was already evident. According to this idea, adaptation to new conditions was closely related to the process of social evolution. A powerful force, *t'ien* in Yen Fu's terminology, endlessly pushed the human world towards perfection through the process of progressive evolution. At any stage of evolution, only those countries or races which could step into a higher level of evolution survived, and those which failed would inevitably perish. As Yen Fu indicated, `the lower the race is, the more difficult for it to survive. This is not only

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[43]For a brief description of the threatened `partition of China' after 1895, see Immanuel C.Y. Hsu, `Later Ch'ing Foreign Relations (1866-1905)', in *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 11, pp. 109-15.

[44]CYFW., vol. 3, p. 521.

[45]For a brief discussion of the differences between Lamarckism and Darwinism both in biology and in its social application, see Greta Jones, *Social Darwinism in English Thought*, Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1980, esp. chapter v.

true in the natural world, but also true in the human world. We have seen this in the perishing of natives in North America and Australia.[46]

Yen Fu's very peculiar interpretation of the Darwinian notion of `fitter' stemmed from his effort to smuggle moralism, imbedded in the Confucian notion of *t'ien*, into his Darwinist argument. As James Pusey has observed, the fundamental difference between the Confucian notion of *t'ien* and the Darwinian notion of nature is that in Confucianism *t'ien* blessed the righteous rather than the strong while in Western social Darwinism nature blessed only the strong with survival. A fundamental conviction of Confucianism is `that right is might, that virtue worked' while the ethics of social Darwinism was a doctrine of holding that might is right.[47] On this critical issue, Yen Fu sided with Confucianism rather than social Darwinism. He believed that a people was judged by *t'ien* as fit or unfit based on the characters, values, and intellectual development of its people. The strength of a country lay less in its wealth and military power than in its superior moral and intellectual development. In this regard, his criticism of Japan is illustrative. In his essay, `Whence Strength: A Sequel' in 1895, he commented on the external and internal policies of Japan. He praised Japanese efforts over previous decades in learning from the West, but asserted that Japan had only learned the superficial aspects of the West, rather than its substance. He wrote:

> The ambition of Japan is great, but the way it pursues it is extremely wrong.... Japan has undertaken reform for several decades. Although they don't lack competent reformist leaders, the ruling groups on the whole have failed to nurture harmony among her people and bring the `foundation' (*pen*) of the country to a high level. They choose rather to use force to try to conquer the world (*t'ien-hsia*). ... If the abundance of goods as well as the wealth and strength of a country can be achieved by such an anti-historical and radical means without destroying the country, what are Darwin's and Spencer's books worth?

[46]CYFW, vol. 5, p. 1331.

[47]James Pusey, *China and Charles Darwin*, p. 65.

> Many Chinese like to accuse the Japanese of having only learned the superficial aspect of the West: can we say that this is a harsh judgment? The book *huang-shih-kung chi* states: `The person who pursues expansion of his lands will eventually fail, and the person who pursues expansion of moral virtue will gain strength; the person who keeps only what belongs to him will have security; the person who claims the belongings of others is only ruthless. The policies of ruthless robbers might be successful in a short run, but are eventually disastrous.' The Japanese have not realized their own impoverishment due to their military exploits. They have continually used military force to exploit neighbours for their wealth. This is the behaviour of a robber. What kind of Western learning has so lamentably brought up such a disciple? If we teach our people only the superficial aspect of Western learning, this will be like giving an evil person or reckless youth a powerful weapon, enabling him to rob in the market or kill the elderly. This is a suicidal policy.[48]

It is interesting to note here that Yen Fu twice used the phrase `the superficial aspect (*hsing-hsia)* of Western learning', and suggested these aspects are not present in the books of Darwin and Spencer. The phrase *hsing-hsia* [or *hsing-erh-hsia*] and its opposite, *hsing-erh-shang*, are two important conceptions in Confucian philosophy.[49] Yen Fu's use of these phrases parallels his frequent use of the phrases: *pen* (foundational) and *mo* (functional) to identify two aspects of Western learning: its fundamental, or moral and spiritual aspect, and its functional, or material aspect. If a nation pursues only its material aspect, namely wealth and power, and uses power to seek unrighteous material gains, it has only understood the superficial aspect of Western learning and neglected its spiritual and moral aspect.

Yen Fu used the dichotomy of a barbarous way and a civilized way to express

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[48]CYFW., vol. 1, pp. 38-9.

[49]These two phrases first appeared in *I Ching*: `What is *hsing-erh-shang* is called the way (*tao)* and what is *hsing-erh-hsia* is called means (*ch'i*).'

a similar idea. In 1897, after German troops occupied Ch'iao-ch'ou Bay on the east coast of China, he denounced the `barbarous way' of Germany: `The Germans used religious conflict as a pretext for suddenly seizing Ch'iao-ch'ou Bay. This not only means that they treat us in a barbarous way, but means that they treat themselves in a barbarous way.'[50] This `barbarous way' meant what Huxley called `the ape's and tiger's methods in the struggle for existence.'[51] International competition, Yen Fu argued, should follow the `civilized way':

> The so-called civilized people of the civilized nations are such that: although they have power, they do not humiliate others by it. Although they have force, they do not take belongings from others. When something happens, they consider human feelings and follow Heavenly principles (*t'ien-li*) before making decisions. They do not impose any tyranny on others which they would not like others to impose on themselves. ... If human beings treat each other in such a way, we call it justice (*kung-li*). If nations deal with each other in such a way, international law (*Kung-fa*) is honoured. If we discuss human affairs and international affairs by following such distinctions, and take them as our criterion for right and wrong, we call it just discussion (*kung-lun*).[52]

Yen Fu wished to convince his readers that although the world was a battlefield of the struggle for existence, only those countries which followed the civilized way in their struggle would survive. Those countries which followed the barbarous way in competition would eventually perish. He supplied a ready example to support his argument. He noted that Spain had once been a powerful country, but

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[50]CYFW, vol. 1, p. 173.

[51]Thomas Huxley, `The ape and tigers methods for the struggle for existence are not reconcilable with sound ethical principle.' (Thomas Huxley, *Evolution and Ethics*, p. 40).

[52]CYFW., vol. 1, p. 55.

had recently declined. The reason for its decline was its engagement in the slave trade, incurring punishment from *t'ien*.[53] By contrast, Britain exemplified the most `fit' nation which both possessed wealth and power and followed the civilized way.

Yen Fu had an extraordinary high regard for Victorian Britain, an admiration probably matched only by that of a later liberal, Hu Shih, in his admiration of America. Except for occasional criticism of British policies such as its opium trade in China, Yen Fu wrote very uncritically of Britain. In his essay `On the Root of Strength', while criticizing Japan for its aggressive policies, Yen Fu praised Britain as a nation in which `people are honest, fair, sober, and hard working. They follow the principle of justice (*kung-li*) in preserving the existence and prosperity of their country.'[54] He even contrasted Britain with Spain in the treatment of black slaves in order to highlight the civilized character of British policy. He recalled the Ambassador Kuo Sung-t'ao's comment on the abolition of slavery in Britain: `We have witnessed the abolition of the slave system in Britain, and we now know that this nation will enjoy its status as a strong nation for some time to come.'[55]

II

The universalistic implication in Yen Fu's notion of being `fit' during the period of 1895 and 1898 became stronger after 1898. In his writings of the 1900s, he noticeably retreated from the nationalistic rhetoric of the later 1890s and more prominently located his notion of being `fit' in the framework of social evolution.

This shift in Yen Fu's position was by and large a response to changes in the political and intellectual climate, particularly to the emergence of nationalist ideologies and movements around the turn of the century. Nationalism, as some recent studies have argued, was not an entirely modern phenomenon in China and had deep historical roots.[56] Mitigating this interpretation of early nationalism is the point

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[53]CYFW., vol. 4, p. 872.

[54]CYFW., vol. 1, p. 38.

[55]CYFW., vol. 4, p. 962.

[56]The prevailing view in Western studies of Chinese nationalism, as presented by

that orthodox Confucianism was characterized by a universalistic tendency which followed from its pursuit of moral goals, rather than by any particular goals concerning China *per se*. Nevertheless, given China's long history of dealing with, often conflicting with, many different tribes and communities, a sense of Chinese political self-consciousness also developed in Chinese culture.[57] Under the pressure of external crises, arguments concerning the welfare and security of China *per se* would be heard over universalistic moral ideals, as demonstrated by early Sung `proto-nationalism'.[58]

During the second half of the nineteenth century, as China faced serious external threats, there was a resurgence of nationalist sentiment, particularly in the wake of the Sino-Japanese war. At this juncture (1895-98), Yen Fu's propagation of the social Darwinian doctrine of the struggle for existence and natural selection contributed greatly to the process of the development of modern Chinese nationalism. These ideas greatly strengthened the sense of crisis that had existed among the literati from several decades earlier. After the publication of Yen Fu's essays in 1895 and particularly after his translation of Huxley' *Evolution and Ethics*, the intellectuals' sense of crisis was compounded by the nightmare of being eliminated, as predicted by

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Joseph Levenson and Benjamin Schwartz, holds that Chinese nationalism is a modern phenomenon, an import from the West. (Joseph Levenson, *Confucian China and Its Modern Fate: a Trilogy*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1958; Benjamin Schwartz, *In Search of Wealth and Power.*) This view has been challenged by some recent studies. Hoyt Tillman's `Proto-Nationalism in Twelfth-Century China? The Case Study of Ch'en Liang', (*Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, No. 39, 1979, pp. 403-428), and Rolf Trauzettel's `Sung Patriotism as a First Step toward Chinese Nationalism' (in *Crisis and Prosperity in Sung China*, ed. John Haeger, University of Arizona Press, 1975, pp. 199-213) have argued that the emergence of Chinese nationalism could be traced as early as the Sung dynasty (960-1297). James Townsend's `Chinese Nationalism' (*The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, No. 27, January 1992, pp. 97-130) also argued that the Chinese nation and Chinese nationalist sentiments have existed for centuries.

[57]On the co-existence of `culturalism' and `nationalism' in traditional China, see James Townsend, `Chinese Nationalism'.

[58]Hoyt Tillman, `Proto-Nationalism in Twelfth-Century China? The Case Study of Ch'en Liang'; Rolf Trauzettel, `Sung Patriotism as a First Step toward Chinese Nationalism'.

Darwin. 'To become the fit' became the slogan of the day, and it even became popular in the selection of personal names.[59] Hu Shih, a renowned liberal intellectual of the early twentieth century, recalled the influence of Yen Fu's introduction of social Darwinism to the Chinese public:

> Within a few years of its publication *Evolution and Ethics* gained widespread popularity throughout the country, and even became reading matter for middle-school students. Very few who read the book could understand [the significance of] Huxley's contribution to scientific and intellectual history. What they did understand was the significance of such phrases as 'the advanced are victorious and the backward perish' (*yu-sheng lueh-pai*) as they applied to international politics....Within a few years these ideas spread like a prairie fire, setting ablaze the hearts and blood of many young people. Technical terms like 'elimination' (*t'ao-t'ai*) and 'natural selection' (*t'ien-tse*) became common in journalistic prose, and slogans on the lips of patriotic young heroes.[60]

Yen Fu watched the resurgence of nationalism with mixed feelings. To be sure, he was a nationalist when the word is used in a broad sense. Nationalism of the early-twentieth-century China, as Mary C. Wright wrote, appeared in three different, though sometimes related spheres. First, it called for action not only to halt but to roll back the tide of imperialism; secondly, it demanded the organization of a modern centralized nation-state, capable both of forcing back the imperialists and of forwarding the country's new aspirations in political, social, economic, and cultural life; thirdly, nationalism meant overthrowing the Manchu dynasty.[61] By Wright's

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[59]Jerome B. Grieder, *Hu Shih and the Chinese Renaissance: Liberalism in the Chinese Revolution, 1917-1937*, Cambridge: Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970, p. 27.

[60]Quoted from Jerome B. Grieder, op. cit., p. 26. I have made a minor change in Grieder's translation.

[61]Mary C. Wright ed., *China in Revolution: the First Phase, 1900-1913*, New

classification, Yen Fu was a nationalist in the sense that he was concerned with the survival of China as a nation through the process of nation-building. Beyond this, Yen Fu never committed himself to nationalism as an ideology of either anti-foreignism or anti-Manchuism. On the contrary, he was one of the few leading intellectuals around the turn of the century who realized the danger of nationalism becoming an ideology of anti-foreignism or anti-Manchuism and rejected it openly.

Yen Fu's criticism of revolutionary anti-Manchuism has been noted both by Schwartz and Pusey. Both interpreted his criticism of anti-Manchuism to stem from a genuine nationalistic concern to pull all Chinese together, whether Manchu or Han Chinese, in order to fight foreign powers.[62] This explanation does not fully account for the strength of Yen Fu's opposition to the emerging anti-foreignism.

Anti-foreignism, as Liao Kuang-sheng has shown, emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century among the Chinese people `as a result of the failure of modernization, and in opposition to military aggression, economic exploitation and political repression by Western powers and Japan.'[63] The 1900s saw the surge of anti-foreignism both in the propaganda of radical revolutionaries and in popular movements such as the Boxer Rebellion, the movement to reclaim China's railway and mining rights, and the movement to boycott American goods.[64] The primary goal of anti-foreignism was to drive out foreigners and foreign influences from China.

Yen Fu was one of the few, if any, leading intellectuals who openly denounced various anti-foreign movements and ideologies. Yen was hostile to the Boxer Rebellion of 1900 which he characterized as `stupid, absurd, emotional, tyrannical' and `barbarous'.[65] He opposed the movement to reclaim railway and

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Haven: Yale University Press, 1968, pp. 3-4.

[62]Benjamin Schwartz, *In Search of Wealth and Power*, pp. 183-5; James Pusey, *China and Charles Darwin*, pp. 326-7.

[63]Liao Kuang-sheng, *Anti-foreignism and Modernization in China, 1860-1980*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984, p. 9.

[64]Ibid., p. 50.

[65]CYFW., vol. 1, p. 119.

mining rights from foreign powers in the 1900s, a widespread popular movement of resistance to the waves of concessions in China's railways and mining industries to foreign powers which occurred in the wake of the Sino-Japanese war.[66] He also took a very unpopular position of opposing the boycott of American goods in 1905, a mass movement which protested against the United States' discriminatory law against the Chinese.[67]

Some of Yen Fu's criticisms of anti-foreign movements were focused more on their means than goals. For instance, he was sympathetic to the grievances of the organizers of the boycott against American goods. He himself criticized the American policy of discrimination against the Chinese. However, he was concerned that organizing a nationwide mass movement might aggravate xenophobia, which would jeopardize Sino-American relations and impede China's efforts at modernization.[68]

Yen Fu's criticism of the anti-foreign argument indicated a strong universalistic tendency. He perceived China's conflicts with the West not simply as a struggle between different nations, but as a struggle between an advanced civilization and a backward one. He argued that the only way for China to survive was to become civilized and modernized itself, rather than to drive foreigners out of the country.

In a letter to the editors of *Wai-chiao pao* (The journal of diplomacy) in 1902, Yen Fu introduced a distinction between barbarous anti-foreignism and civilized anti-foreignism. The essence of barbarous anti-foreignism, he suggested, was isolating

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[66]For an account of the movement to reclaim China's railway and mining rights, see Lee En-han, *China's Quest for Railway Autonomy, 1904-1911*, Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1977, pp. 13-24; for Yen Fu's criticism of the movement, see his *`lu-kuang-yi'* (On railway and mining rights), in *Wai-chiao pao* (The journal of diplomacy), March 1902, see CYFW., vol. 1, pp. 104-14.

[67]The boycott was triggered by the renewal of `the Chinese Restriction Act' by the United State government in 1904, which included harsh discriminatory measures against Chinese immigration and travel to the United States. As the Ch'ing government was too weak to do anything, Chinese businessmen, students and above all the news media mobilized a popular movement in boycotting American goods as a means of protest. (For a discussion of the law and the responses of the Chinese government and public, see Chang Chun-wu, *Chung-mei kung-yüeh fen-ch'ao* [China's boycott against American goods, 1905-1906], Taipei, 1966, pp. 1-56.)

[68]CYFW., vol. 3, p. 568.

China from international competition. This primitive sentiment offered nothing to benefit China or the world. Yen's preferred civilized anti-foreignism was not anti-foreign at all. It simply meant reforming China by following the lead of Western civilization, and gaining for China equal status with the Western powers through modernization and progress. He wrote:

> The weakness of our country since the Tao-kuang and T'ung-chih period (1840-1860) has been almost entirely caused by our internal problems. Therefore, it is senseless for us to now advocate anti-foreignism in an attempt to escape international competition. Instead of stirring up anti-foreignism, we would be better off following the progress of civilization. If we become civilized, we should be able to survive in international competition without ever letting anti-foreign talk cross our lips. By contrast, if we pursue the course of anti-foreignism instead of developing our civilization, we would not only be unable to achieve equality with foreign powers, but also create enormous obstacles for the development of our civilization.[69]

Several years later, Yen Fu dropped the notion of `barbarous anti-foreignism' and used `nationalism' and `patriotism' instead. His later more direct criticism of nationalism and patriotism emerged in connection with his translations of Spencer's *The Study of Sociology* and Jenks' *A History of Politics*.

Spencer's name has long been associated with social Darwinist doctrine of the struggle for existence because his idea of individualism was based on the law of natural selection. Nevertheless, Spencer never attempted to apply the principle of natural selection to international competition. On the contrary, he strongly opposed colonial expansion and military conflicts which some social Darwinists regarded as necessary for human evolution.[70] One of the chapters of his *The Study of Sociology* was devoted to criticising what he called `the bias of patriotism'. He argued that in

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[69]Ibid., p. 558.

[70]J.D.Y. Peel, *Herbert Spencer: the Evolution of a Sociologist*, pp. 232-7.

order to develop a scientific sociology, one must overcome various biases, which he discussed under the titles of `the educational bias', `the bias of patriotism', `the class bias', `the political bias', and `the theological bias'. Spencer's bias of patriotism was the sentiment of loyalty to `our country, right or wrong'.[71] `Patriotism', Spencer argued, `is nationally that which egoism is individually - has, in fact, the same root; and along with kindred benefits brings kindred evils.'[72] About the possible evils and benefits of egoism and patriotism, Spencer wrote:

> Self-regard in excess produces two classes of evils: by promoting undue assertion of personal claims it breeds aggression and antagonism; and by creating undue estimation of personal powers it excites futile efforts that end in catastrophes. Deficient self-regard produces two possible classes of evils: by not asserting personal claims, it invites aggression, so fostering selfishness in others; and by not adequately valuing personal powers it causes a falling short of attainable benefits. Similarly with patriotism. From too much, there result national aggressiveness and national vanity. Along with too little, there goes an insufficient tendency to maintain national claims, leading to trespasses by other nations; and there goes an undervaluing of national capacities and institutions, which is discouraging to effort and progress.[73]

Between these two evils, Spencer's primary concern was the excess of patriotism. As with his criticism of militarism, Spencer took to task patriotic sentiments in Western nations as responsible for their biased understanding of other races, other religions, and above all their unjust treatment of other races, such as the

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[71]Herbert Spencer, *The Study of Sociology*, p. 185.

[72]Ibid., pp. 185-6.

[73]Ibid., pp. 186-7.

'treatment of the North American Indians by our own race'.[74] Spencer then stated:

> See, then, how the bias of patriotism indirectly produces erroneous views of the effects of an institution. Blinded by national self-love to the badness of our conduct towards inferior races, while remembering what there is of good in our conduct; forgetting how well these inferior races have usually behaved to us, and remembering only their misbehaviour, which we refrain from tracing to its cause in our own transgressions; we over-value our own natures as compared with theirs.[75]

Yen Fu seems to have been impressed by Spencer's criticism of patriotism. In the preface to his translation of *The Study of Sociology*, he expressed his agreement with Spencer in the following poem:

> Man lived in groups originally,
> Groups developed into nations.
> Self-assertion caused disrespect of others,
> The excess of self-love led to acts of robbery;
> Insufficient self-assertion leads to cowardice,
> It is also out of balance;
> Only with sincerity and without bias,
> Can one have fair judgments.[76]

Yen Fu's explicit denunciation of nationalism and patriotism was probably stimulated by Spencer's idea. In one of his letters to a friend in 1906, Yen Fu wrote, 'what is called patriotism (*ai-kuo chu-i*) is a word associated with nationalism (*min-*

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[74]Ibid., pp. 187-93.

[75]Ibid., p. 193.

[76]Yen Fu, *Ch'un-hsueh yi-yen* (A translation of Herbert Spencer's *The Study of Sociology*), p. 3.

tsu chu-i). It is not regarded by Western sages as the highest moral ideal.'[77] Yen Fu's Western sages very likely included Spencer. Nevertheless, Edward Jenks' *A History of Politics*, more than Spencer's work, provided Yen Fu with weapons for attacking nationalism directly. From Jenks, Yen Fu gained the idea of associating nationalism with the patriarchal stage in social evolution.

It seems ironic that Yen Fu found an anti-nationalist weapon in Jenks' work. Jenks, like so many later writers on the issues of nationhood and nationalism, regarded the emergence of the nation-state and nationalism as a modern phenomenon. Nowhere in his *A History of Politics* did Jenks criticize this recent development, but he discussed nationalism positively in contrast to what he called `exclusive religion' in patriarchal society. One of the important differences between patriarchal society and the modern nation, according to Jenks, was their different types of identities and underlying religious ideas. The patriarchal community, Jenks argued, was built on the basis of kinship, namely, blood relationships,[78] and therefore demonstrated a characteristic of racial exclusiveness. `No one can be regarded as a full member of the tribe unless he is the lawful child of a full tribesman.'[79] The modern nation, by contrast, `was essentially *territorial* in character'.[80] `Whosoever lived, nay, whosoever happened to be,' within the dominions of a nation was the subject of the ruler of the nation and bound to obey the laws of the land.[81] Therefore, the ruler of a nation `was often anxious to throw open the country to foreign adventurers, whether merchants, ecclesiastics or teachers, believing that his fame and wealth would thereby be increased.'[82] Underlying the territorial union of the modern nation, Jenks suggested, was a new type of religion, `the chief characteristic of which was *universality*',

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[77]Yen Fu, `A Letter to Hsia Cheng-you', in *Chung-kuo tse-hsueh* (Chinese Philosophy), No. 6 (1981), pp. 341-2.

[78]Edward Jenks, *A History of Politics*, p. 16.

[79]Ibid., p. 33.

[80]Ibid., p. 77.

[81]Ibid.

[82]Ibid., p. 78.

contrasting sharply with the exclusiveness of patriarchal religion.[83]

Yen Fu was impressed by Jenks' criticism of patriarchal identity, but he apparently did not fully understand Jenks' distinction between identity in patriarchal community and that in the modern nation. Rather, he regarded Jenks' criticism of the exclusive religion of patriarchal society as a general criticism of any kind of exclusive religion whether based on race or on nationality. With this, he adopted Jenks' ideas to argue against nationalism.

Yen Fu identified two types of nationalism existent in China, anti-foreignism and anti-Manchuism, both of which were manifestations of a patriarchal society. He wrote in one of the commentary notes to his translation of *A History of Politics*:

> All political factions in China today, though differing by their conservative or radical views, share a common belief in nationalism *(min-tsu chu-i)*. They advocate group unity *(he-ch'un)*, anti-foreignism or anti-Manchuism, yet rarely mention political society or individual self-assertion.[84] What is called nationalism has existed in our race for a long time. We do not need to import it from abroad. It manifests itself whenever we have a crisis situation. Is nationalism sufficient for strengthening our race? I definitely do not think so.[85]

Yen Fu argued that China should learn from new ideas rather than from old practices of the West. He suggested that nationalism was a phenomenon only existent in patriarchal society and often related to despotic government.[86] He wrote:

> Nationalism is an authentic characteristic of patriarchal society. If we

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[83]Ibid.

[84]The phrase `political state' is used by Jenks to characterize modern society. See the last chapter for a detailed discussion.

[85]Yen Fu, *She-hui t'ung-ch'uan* (A translation of Jenks' *A History of Politics*), p. 108.

[86]CYFW., vol. 1, p. 148.

> uphold nationalism before the people of the five continents in the modern age, how could they come to have a high opinion of our people? If a nation is able to renovate its people to a state of excellence, it is hard to imagine it being eliminated, even without any armour of nationalism. By contrast, if the people of a nation do not have a higher characters and yet possess nationalism, nationalism, like mercantilist economics (*shang-tsung tzu chi-hsueh*), will bring them harm rather than benefit.[87]

Yen Fu's criticism of nationalism stirred a furious reaction from nationalist revolutionaries. Immediately after he published his translation of Jenks' *A History of Politics*, some prominent figures in the revolutionary camp such as Wang Ching-wei, Hu Han-min and Chang Ping-lin, rose to repudiate Yen Fu's views on nationalism.[88] While their repudiations concentrated on Yen Fu's criticism of anti-Manchuism, they nevertheless also touched on the issue of nationalism in its broadest sense.

The most unkind criticism of Yen Fu's views came from Chang Ping-lin. While Chang did not dispute the validity of Jenks' general account of historical evolution through stages, he nevertheless repudiated Yen Fu's association of nationalism with patriarchal society. He went on to denounce Yen Fu's classification of Chinese society by the category of patriarchal society. Nationalism, Chang argued, was a political phenomenon which could exist in savage, patriarchal and political societies alike.[89] It had nothing to do with patriarchal society and everything to do

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[87]Ibid.

[88]Wang Ching-wei, `Min-tsu ti kuo-min' (A nationalistic citizenry), *Min-pao*, No. 1 (Nov. 26, 1905); Hu Han-min, `Shu Hou-kuan Yen-shih tsui-chin cheng-chien' (The most recent political views of Yen Fu), *Min-pao*, No. 2 (January 22, 1906); Chang Ping-lin, `*She-hui t'ung-ch'uan* shang-tui' (Critical review of *A History of Politics*), *Min-pao*, No. 12, (March 6, 1907).

[89]Chang Ping-lin, `*She-hui t'ung-ch'üan* shang-tui' (Critical review of *A History of Politics*), in Chang Nan & Wang Jen-chih ed., *Hsin-hai ko-ming ch'ien shih-nien chien shih-lun hsuan-chi* (Selections from opinions expressed in periodicals and newspapers during the decade before the 1911 Revolution), Peking: San-lien 1963, vol. 2, No. 2, p. 656.

with external pressures. Historically, Chang argued, the Chinese tended to accept foreign cultures or people rather than demonstrate cultural exclusiveness.[90] When Buddhism entered China in the Han dynasty, he indicated, the Chinese people embraced it without demonstrating any sentiments of exclusivity. Even in the initial period of Christian missionary activity, the Chinese people welcomed Christianity jubilantly, just as plants welcome rain after a long period of drought.[91] The Chinese people demonstrated nationalist sentiments only when they faced threat from foreign forces. Since the late nineteenth century, Chang argued, the Western powers had demonstrated their intention to take Chinese land and enslave Chinese people. It was only natural that the Chinese people developed sentiments of anti-foreignism. `Supposing those people in what are called modern political societies face such a situation,' asked Chang, `would they give up the fight?'[92] In fact, Chang maintained, nationalism was much stronger in Western societies than in China. There had been a string of independence movements in Europe since the nineteenth century, such as in Germany, Ireland, Hungary etc. There was discrimination against the red and black races in America. Even socialists in Europe did not consider the yellow peoples capable of benefiting from the socialist system.[93] The Western nations not only had nationalism, Chang charged, they even had totemic symbols such as their national flags. They too were in a patriarchal stage, or worse still, in a savage stage.[94] Saying this, Chang launched a personal attack against Yen Fu and his pro-Western position:

> There are many people in our country who respect Yen Fu greatly and therefore some politicians have used his theory to fool our people. Perhaps people do not know about Yen Fu. When he was young he went abroad and studied in the West where he was so overwhelmed

[90]Ibid., p. 652.

[91]Ibid., p. 653.

[92]Ibid., pp. 652-3.

[93]Ibid., p. 657.

[94]Ibid., pp. 657-8.

and impressed by their races that he came to see yellow men as base and vile like badgers from the same mound, whether Manchu or Han.[95]

Chang's position very much reflected the popular nationalistic sentiment of the Chinese elites which motivated various anti-foreign movements. At the core of this sentiment was deep resentment of the Western powers for their aggressive actions in China. It rejected Yen Fu's and a few other reformers' view that the West was somehow more civilized than China and deemed the West to be using its greater power to selfish and immoral ends. Opinions about the West like Chang's were ironically reinforced by Yen Fu's efforts in propagating the social Darwinian notion of the struggle for existence and natural selection. Many proponents of anti-foreignism simply ignored the moralistic and universalistic aspect of Yen Fu's interpretation of social Darwinism, and took social Darwinism for free licence in the ruthless struggle for existence. As Hu Han-min indicated, it was Yen Fu who told his readers that we had to fight for survival. Hu wrote:

> After the appearance of Yen Fu's book, the ideas of the struggle for existence and natural selection were clarified in people's minds. Consequently the consensus changed. It is fair to say that those who advocated group unity, anti-foreignism, and anti-Manchuism were stimulated by the trend of events of the time; it is also true that Yen made a significant contribution to this process.[96]

Yen Fu did become aware of the potential contradiction between his description of the world as a Darwinian battlefield and his assertion that Western

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[95]Ibid., p. 648. The English translation is from James Pusey, *China and Charles Darwin*, p. 329 (translation revised).

[96]Hu Han-min, 'Shu Hou-kuan Yen-shih tsui-chin cheng-chien' (The most recent political views of Yen Fu), in Chang Nan & Wang Jen-chih ed., *Hsin-hai ko-ming ch'ien shih-nien chien shih-lun hsuan-chi* (Selections from opinions expressed in periodicals and newspapers during the decade before the 1911 Revolution), Peking: San-lien, 1963, vol. 2, No. 1, p. 146.

nations were in a higher stage of social evolution. To ease this theoretical difficulty, he began in the mid-1900s to retreat from his previous position. He began to portray the modern world less as a battlefield than as a progressive collectivity in which the West was in the lead. This view became apparent in his speech of 1906 entitled `Is it True that Might is Right?'[97] He started his speech by identifying the prevalent misunderstanding of Darwinist ideas in China:

> I have learned that the concept of `might-as-right' has gained popularity in our intellectual discussions. There have been popular expressions such as `moralism is anachronism' and `international laws are empty words.'[98]...If these are merely expressions of our feelings of frustration, they are allowable. However, to take these assertions as maxims to guide our actions will lead to great danger. In so employing them, our civilization will deteriorate, and there will be increased centrifugal force and declining centripetal force in our society. Nothing can be more dangerous to our society than this.[99]

To repudiate this maxim of `might-as-right' as normative principle, Yen Fu appealed to moral ideals in classical Chinese philosophy. He remarked that since the three dynasties of antiquity, Chinese sages had never accepted power politics (*ch'iang-ch'uan*) to be morally righteous. Important classics such as the *I Ching* and *Ch'un-ch'iu* (The Spring and Autumn Annals) subordinated the use of force to the principle of justice (*kung-li*).

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[97]Yen Fu, `Yu ch'iang-ch'üan wu kung-li tsu-yü hsin-yü?' (Is it true that might is right?), *Chih-li chiao-yü tsa-chih*, June, 22, 1906, reprinted in *Tang-an yü li-shih* (Archives and history), Peking, 1990, No. 3.

[98]Yen Fu might have referred here to Liang Ch'i-ch'ao's statement that might is right in a Darwinian world. For Liang's idea of might as right, see Chang Hao, *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and Intellectual Transition in China, 1890-1907*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971, pp. 193-6.

[99]Yen Fu, `Yu ch'iang-ch'üan wu kung-li tsu-yü hsin-yü?' (Is it true that might is right?), p. 6.

> This position was even more clearly spelled out by Mencius. Born in the time of Warring States to witness the prevalence of power politics and the decay of heavenly principles, Mencius still revered the *wang tao* (governance by benevolence) and denounced *pa tao* (governance by force).... He demonstrated that justice is the fundamental principle which will eternally apply to human world and showed the use of force to be effective only under the sanction of the principle of justice.[100]

The maxim of might-as-right, Yen Fu suggested, originated in Europe, and was traceable to ancient Greek philosophy. As recorded in *Plato's Republic*, Thrasymachus, in his debate with Socrates on the issue of justice, made the assertion that `what is expedient for the strongest is just'.[101] Yen Fu then noted that Socrates invalidated this assertion of Thrasymachus through his famous dialectical method.[102] In a historical book by Brudachis, it was recorded that the King of Bruno claimed that `the law of the strong ruling the weak is both the law of the human world since the antiquity and the law governing the world of all living creatures'.[103] Many Western political theorists since ancient times held that `the state is the work of violent domination. It is based on the right of the stronger.'[104]

Yen Fu argued that this `old principle' of might-as-right was opposed to the spirit of modern politics. To apply such a principle would create a world in which each fights the other. In such a world, no country, even the stronger, could feel safe

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[100]Ibid.

[101]Ibid., this quotation was originally in English.

[102]Ibid., on the debate between Socrates and Thrasymachus, see *Plato's Republic*, Book I, 338 & 340, translated by G.M.A. Grube, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1974, pp. 12-5.

[103]Yen Fu, `Yu ch'iang-ch'üan wu kung-li tsu-yü hsin-yü?' (Is it true that might is right?), p. 7.

[104]Ibid., this quotation is originally in English.

since today's strong country might become tomorrow's weak country.[105] Moreover, the application of such a principle would fundamentally undermine the moral fabric of society - the condition of its very existence. Yen Fu wrote:

> Power politics is fundamentally opposed to the idea of freedom. ... If the principle of power politics were put into practice, then the five ethical relationships *(wu-lung)* would be destroyed. After this, the bond between a son and his father would not be built upon father's kindness and son's filial piety, but upon father's strength; the bond between the ruler and the ruled would not be built upon the ruler's benevolence and people's respect, but upon the ruler's strength; the bond between husband and wife would not be love, but the strength of each side. Thus, all human ethical relationships will be replaced by the relationship between master and slave. In conclusion, in a world of power politics, there will be no free men, and men will all become slaves. There will be no justice and no law. ... If power is regarded as the source of justice and law, there will never be a free humanity.[106]

This is why, Yen Fu argued, the principle of might-as-right was never put into practice by any great nations in the world. Historically, according to Yen Fu, no country which had followed the principle of power alone had lasted long. The fundamental reason underlining the strength of the great powers through history was in the force of justice rather than of military strength. Even in warfare, military strength is only effective for a short time. `In deciding the outcome of war, military strength only carries secondary importance to the cause *(ming-hao)* for which the war is fought.'[107] The cause of the war is essential (*t'i*) and military strength is functional

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[105]Ibid., p. 7.

[106]Ibid.

[107]The phrase *ming-hao* literally means `name'. Yen Fu's usage of this phrase was derived from the concept of *cheng-ming* (rectification of names) in Confucian philosophy. Like Plato, Confucius believed that everything has an `ideal form' which differs from actual forms. It is essential in achieving an ideal society to organize

(yung). Following the principle of justice with the assistance of strength is the key to success.[108]

By the same token, Yen Fu suggested that China's humiliation at the hands of Western powers should be interpreted less as a demonstration of China's military weakness, than as a manifestation of the backward nature of Chinese ideas and systems. For Yen Fu, the Western victory over China `was not only a victory of the stronger over the weaker, but the enlightened over the ignorant, and the virtuous over the unworthy.'[109] The human world was bound to advance towards the enlightened and the virtuous. China's refusal to follow such a trend would only hinder the progress of humanity. Therefore, the Western nations were absolved of guilt in bringing China to a civilized course by invading China. In this event, China should not complain too much of the unjust nature of the world order. He wrote:

> Human beings over the five continents are now moving towards great harmony *(ta-t'ung)*. Nations in Europe and Asia are like village neighbours. Supposing there is a village of about ten families in which most families try hard to keep their yards and front lanes clean and educate their children well. There are one or two families, however, which are proud of their long family tradition, contemptuous of others and reluctant to make progress. The collapse of their house or courtyard walls block the roads of the village, and their ill-educated children fight with others. In response to this situation, the progressive families meet together and decide, `we cannot tolerate this situation any more, and we should govern these families ourselves for the happiness of all people in the village.' After action follows this decision, those one or two delinquent families complain bitterly, saying, `What a world of might-as-right!' They do not understand that

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everything by referring the ideal form.

[108]Yen Fu, `Yu ch'iang-ch'üan wu kung-li tsu-yü hsin-yü?' (Is it true that might is right?), p. 7.

[109]Ibid.

for everyone in the village, the decision follows the principle of justice.[110]

Yen Fu's remarks here clearly demonstrate the universalistic feature of his thought. Without abandoning his concern for China's survival, he shows a concern for China's survival which goes far beyond nationalism in its general sense. He envisions a modern world composed of enlightened, virtuous nations, including a renovated China. In this sense, he is comparable to K'ang Yu-wei, a contemporary. The fundamental concern for both Yen and K'ang, to use Hsiao Kung-chuan's phrase, was `a modern world and a new China'.[111]

A similar idea of Yen Fu was also found in his essay, `Hegel's Philosophy of Mind' published in July 1906.[112] The essay was a general review of *The Philosophy of Mind*, the third part of Hegel's *The Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Science.*[113] In his *Philosophy of Mind*, Hegel traced the gradual evolution of mind, stage by stage, as a process from subjective mind, through objective mind to absolute mind.[114] The first phase in its evolution is subjective mind. Its content is the human mind viewed subjectively as the mind of the individual subject. In the second stage, mind proceeds out of itself into otherness to become objective mind. It creates institutions of law, morality and the state. These institutions are objective. They are the objectification of man's universal self, man's reason, of what one man has in common with all humanity, and of the universal spirit of man. In the third stage, mind develops into

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[110]Ibid., p. 8.

[111]Hsiao Kung-chuan, *A Modern China and a New World: K'ang Yu-wei, Reformer, and Utopian, 1858-1927*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1975.

[112]`Hegel's Philosophy of Mind' is the original English title of the essay. See CYFW, vol. 1, pp. 210-8.

[113]Hegel's *The Encyclopedia* includes three parts: the first is *The Logic*, sometimes referred as `Lesser Logic'; the second is *The Philosophy of Nature*, and the third, *The Philosophy of Mind.*

[114]Hegel, *The Philosophy of Mind*, tr. by William Wallace, Oxford: the Clarendon Press, 1894, pp. 8-9. Wallace was the earliest English translator of the Hegel's work.

absolute mind. This is the human spirit in its manifestations in art, religion and philosophy.[115]

Yen Fu mentioned that he read Hegel's work and wrote the essay in the summer of 1906.[116] At the same time, he also read an English translation of Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, and wrote many marginal notes in the book.[117] He apparently developed an interest in German idealistic philosophy for a short period in 1906, a sort of diversion which was uncommon in his intellectual career.

Yen Fu was interested in Hegel's discussion of the three stages of the development of mind, because he saw it supportive of his universalistic ideal as well as his effort to discredit nationalistic sentiments. Hegel's theory of the development of mind was for Yen Fu in line with modern evolutionary theory since Hegel described the human mind as bound to a process of progressive evolution. Hegel's subjective mind, according to Yen Fu, was `the mind of the individual'. It was the state of mind existing in barbarous people or children before education. The main feature of subjective mind was one's untrammelled freedom. `Barbarous people as well as children followed their material desires blindly like animals. They therefore engaged in struggle with each other in order to achieve self-assertion.'[118] Later, as man became enlightened, he understood the existence of other men who were equal to himself. He then recognized that `he is not a unique person in possessing the ideal, freedom or the notion of the God - the three things identical in nature. Rather, these properties are possessed by the whole of humanity as gifts of God....Thus, based on his own

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[115]W. T. Stace, *The Philosophy of Hegel*, New York: Dover Publications, 1955 edition, pp. 321-4.

[116]CYFW., vol. 1, p. 218; Yen Fu mentioned that since he could not read Germany he read an English translation of *The Philosophy of Mind*. The only English translation available at the time was William Wallace tr., *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind*.

[117]Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (translated into English by J.M.D. Meiklejohn, rev. ed., New York: The Colonial Press, 1900.) is among the small number of Yen Fu's books now preserved in the library of Nanking University, China. We found many of Yen Fu's marginal notes in the book which also indicated that he read the book in June 1906.

[118]CYFW., vol. 1, p. 210.

aspiration for freedom, he will come to understand other people's aspirations for freedom. He will regard freedom of the others as the boundary, the legal limit of his own freedom.'[119] In so doing, Yen Fu continued, `man's mind will be transformed from a mind of animal-like self-assertion to a mind of loving humanity and community. This is what Hegel called the transition from subjective mind to objective mind and absolute mind.'[120]

It should be added that Yen Fu never distinguished objective mind and absolute mind. He perceived Hegel's objective and absolute minds to be what Confucians called universal mind (*tao-hsin*), or the soul of heaven and earth found in Chang Tsai, a Neo-Confucian philosopher.[121] Universal mind was not a negation of subjective mind, but an expansion of subjective mind.

Whatever the theoretical implications of Yen Fu's interpretation of Hegel's notions of subjective, objective and absolute minds on his views on the relationship between individual freedom, self-interest and universal morality, Yen's main concern was the relationship between nationalist spirit and universal value. The subjective mind in the international arena was basically a concern for the survival of a nation. `A nation', wrote Yen Fu, `is a community based on common language, religion, custom, and morality'.[122] As an individual is entitled to be concerned for his own freedom, a nation is also justified to be concerned for its survival. The only way for a nation to survive is to uphold universalistic moral principles rather than appeal to military strength. Yen Fu wrote that Hegel confirmed that the ultimate basis for a nation's strength was in its people's character.[123] The people's character is determined by the ideas upon which a nation is built. In this sense, the rise or decline of empires or nations in history should not be interpreted as victory or defeat of empires or nations themselves, but as the victory or defeat of certain ideas. `Struggle between nations, in

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[119]Ibid., pp. 210-1.

[120]Ibid.

[121]Ibid., p. 211.

[122]Ibid., p. 214.

[123]Ibid.

the last analysis, is nothing but struggle between ideas.' Only fit nations which uphold advanced ideas survive.[124]

Yen Fu's interpretation of Hegel's philosophy of mind in terms of the Darwinian notion of struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest sheds light on his general understanding of Darwinism. In the course of this interpretation more than anywhere else, Yen Fu stated clearly what he meant by Darwinian principles. He wrote:

> People now understand the great difference between wars before the eighteenth century and those after. Wars in ancient time were often caused by the selfish interests of a few rulers. Those rulers mobilized people to engage in bloody killings. Today's wars are normally fought over greater causes. In essence, wars in modern times are wars between two doctrines to decide which is superior. We know that every nation or peoples progresses towards the absolute spirit. The winner of a war must be the one whose doctrine is closer to absolute spirit than that of the loser. ...The winner is the one assisted by *t'ien* and the loser is the one abandoned by *t'ien*. Therefore, to know whether a country is strong, inquire what doctrine it holds to. In other words, we have to examine the moral and intellectual development of its people. If we do not understand this,... and pursue the course of anti-foreignism and regard foreigners as barbarous and ourselves as civilized, we lower ourselves to be at the level of the Boxer rebels, or at best, at the level of Chinese students in Japan.[125] The methods of those two groups are formulas for destroying our country....Hegel said, `a nation's decline or demise is determined by Divine Reprisals'. ...People in the five continents compete in progressing toward absolute spirit. It is often the case that some nations progress faster

[124]Ibid., p. 215-6.

[125]Yen Fu here referred to radical intellectuals. At the time, most Chinese students in Japan were actively involved in revolutionary movements.

than others. In such a case, those nations become leaders of world civilization and become respected by other nations. This was the case of ancient Egypt, Syria, Greece, Rome and France. ...Those advanced nations became the leaders and vanguard in progressing toward objective mind and absolute minds of every other nations.[126]

Yen Fu's universalistic idea expressed here was not unique in the reform generation of the 1890s. It could also be seen in thinkers such as K'ang Yu-wei, T'an Ssu-t'ung and to a lesser degree, Liang Ch'i-ch'ao.[127] These intellectuals shared some views which were apparently paradoxical: they were nationalistic politically, and yet held almost iconoclastic attitudes towards the heritage of the Chinese past; they were culturally `pro-Western' during a period of Western imperialist encroachments on China.[128] These paradoxes have been interpreted as evidence of their acceptance of the ethic of social Darwinism. For instance, Schwartz suggested that Yen Fu's lack of anti-Western sentiments stemmed from his recognition of might being right. `It is entirely inevitable that those states which are fit should struggle among themselves for predominance. China must itself bear the heavy onus for its failure to adapt.'[129] From our preceding discussions, it is clear that Schwartz's interpretation neglects the fundamental reason underlying Yen Fu's criticism of Chinese tradition and his esteem for the modern West: Yen Fu sincerely believed that the West was better than China in almost every aspect. His perception of the West combined a genuine sense of discovery with his own utopian projections. `The "West" in this sense' as Furth noted, `served not only as a "real" model of civilized alternatives, but also as a repository for

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[126]CYFW., vol. 1, p. 216.

[127]For a brief yet insightful observation of `the reform generation' of 1890s, see Charlotte Furth, `Intellectual Change: from the Reform Movement to the May Fourth Movement, 1895 - 1920', in *Cambridge History of China*, vol. 12, ed. John K. Fairbank, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, esp. pp. 323-47.

[128]Ibid., pp. 346-7.

[129]Benjamin Schwartz, *In Search of Wealth and Power*, p. 89.

ideal images projected out of the historical imagination of the Chinese themselves."[130]

III

Yen Fu's much idealized portrayal of the modern West planted the seeds of his disillusionment with Western models after the outbreak of the First World War. As Schwartz noted about Yen Fu's later years, particularly those after the outbreak of the First World War, Yen began to voice disapproval of the Western models which he earlier had so energetically advocated. The reason for Yen Fu's change of heart, Schwartz suggested, was that Yen Fu was impressed by initial German victories over the Allies and judged from Germany's enormous power the existence of a shorter path to achieving the power of the state than the path of democracy.[131]

Although this interpretation fits into Schwartz's overall argument, it misrepresents Yen Fu's own position. The real reason behind Yen Fu's shift of position was his general disillusionment with Western nations as offering the best model for human progress in the wake of the First World War.

Yen Fu was initially dismayed by the outbreak of the war. In one of his earliest discussions of the war, dated September 24, 1914, he called it an `extremely unfortunate' event. He blamed Germany's aggressive policy for the start of the war:

> Since 1870, the German Federation has made enormous progress unmatched by any other nation. Not only has its military strength advanced greatly, but its people's livelihood and its culture, such as in medicine, commerce, agriculture, philosophy, physics and other aspects of education, have all progressed enormously. It is unfortunate that such a people is ruled by an arrogant king who uses his people rashly to engage in a war against several great powers. The political doctrine which the German ruler holds has many faults and is not

[130]Ibid., p. 340.

[131]Benjamin Schwartz, *In Search of Wealth and Power*, pp. 231-6.

shared by most of humanity.[132]

The German ruler's political doctrine Yen Fu referred to was the ethic of social Darwinism. In a letter to Hsiung Chung-ju, a disciple of his, several months later, Yen Fu made this clear:

> Germany in the West and Japan in the East, like the Ch'in dynasty of ancient China, know only power, and have no belief in righteousness and justice. Some militarists in Germany, using the idea of evolution, advocated `war as the necessary means for human evolution'. They therefore feel free to kill and destroy. This doctrine appears absolutely fallacious if judged by the real [evolutionary] theory. ...If Heaven or God exists, such a nation is doomed to be condemned. If human nature is good, such a doctrine is bound to disappear before long.[133]

Yen Fu believed that the Germans distorted the real meaning of Darwinism to justify their aggression. After the outbreak of war, many Chinese conservatives saw the war as the inevitable result of the Darwinist principle. Yen Fu strongly dissented. He wrote:

> As far as evolutionary theory is concerned, the doctrines of Darwin and others differ from the evolutionary ideas of present day Germany. The idea that war is the best means of evolutionary progress is quite opposed to Darwin's original meaning....It is unfair to repudiate Darwin's and Huxley's ideas based on examples [of the interpretation of evolution in Germany].[134]

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[132]CYFW., vol. 3, p. 616.

[133]Ibid., p. 622.

[134]Ibid., p. 623.

Nevertheless, Yen Fu conceded that some elements in Darwinist doctrine itself might be responsible for the current ruthlessness in human struggles. He wrote in 1915:

> Since the appearance of the doctrine of `the struggle for existence and natural selection', all races on the earth have regarded self-preservation and expansion as their ultimate goals. As a consequence, all material and scientific achievements over the last two or three hundred years have been turned into the means of genocide. Doctrines of Yao, Sung, Duke Chou and Confucius not only do not work any more, but the doctrines of Lao Tzu, Jesus and Mohammed can hardly reduce the suffering of humanity. Oh! My God! How can the way of human beings become so brutal now?[135]

Nevertheless, Yen still insisted that the essential part of Darwinism, namely progressive human evolution through enhancing people's moral and intellectual characters, still held valid. In a song he composed for a school in 1917, he wrote, `*t'ien* wants to push humanity into a universal harmonious world. Competing nations are judged as superior (*yu*) or inferior (*lueh*) according to their people's virtues.'[136] The tone of this remark is not much different from the basic meaning of his notion of struggle to be fit in his early writings.

The war in Europe affected less Yen Fu's faith in the law of social evolution than his faith in the Western nations as the apogee of the evolutionary potential of humanity. He had spent almost his entire intellectual career advocating China's transformation based on the Western model. Now he began to doubt whether the West really represented the future of humanity. In his letter to Hsiung Chung-ju of 1918, he wrote: `having witnessed ... the four year bloody war in Europe which surpassed previous wars in human history, I feel that the three hundred years of evolution of Western civilization has only brought it to a state of bloody killing in

[135]CYFW., vol. 2, p. 348.

[136]CYFW., vol. 3, p. 689.

shameless pursuit of self-interest.'[137]

Yen Fu's disillusionment with the West stemmed from his realization that Western civilization as a whole overemphasized nationalism and patriotism and worshipped force as the means of solving human conflict. This disillusionment with Western civilization motivated his reevaluation of Confucianism. In a letter dated April 26, 1917 he wrote: `I have studied various philosophies throughout my life. As I approach seventy years of age, I have come to the realization that the most enduring and flawless philosophy is Confucianism. Confucian classics are the most valuable treasures. We need to use modern means to explore and develop the ideas in those treasures.'[138]

Yen Fu came to cherish Confucian universalism against Western devotion to nationalism and patriotism. In an essay written in English in 1916, Yen Fu quoted the Sung philosopher Chang Tsai to elaborate the universalistic concern of Confucianism:

> His [a Confucian's] business, in a word, as it was stated by a great Confucian scholar in the Sung dynasty (about the 12th century A.D.) Chang Tsai, is `to represent the Soul of the whole Creation, to set up a standard for human lives, and to establish a moving equilibrium for the coming eternity.'[139]

He praised the high moral ideals of Confucianism:

> These great teachers of the old are no Materialists. They look upon the world with generous sympathy, accomplishing themselves with much excellence, and entertaining many good hopes. There was an honourable display of those qualities which make life better worth

[137]Ibid., p. 692.

[138]Ibid., p. 668.

[139]Yen Fu, `A Historical Account of Ancient Political Societies in China', in *The Chinese Social and Political Science Review*, Peking, vol. 1, No. 4 (December 1916), p. 19.

having, and they were sincerely earnest in making the world better worth living in for those who were to come after them.[140]

Yen Fu believed that the value of universalism and the evils of nationalism and patriotism had also been understood by many Westerners thanks to the shock of the war. He related the following story several times to his readers. A nurse in the British army, named Miss Cavell, offered medical care to a captured enemy soldier who was wounded. Because the captured soldier later escaped, Miss Cavell was sentenced to death by a British Army court. She left the following words before she was shot: `Patriotism is worthless as a morality. It derives from selfishness, rather than from the Soul of the whole Creation.'[141] Yen Fu concluded:

> In the past, when I heard traditional scholars saying that there would be one day when Confucianism would prevail amongst humanity, I thought they were talking nonsense. Now, we witness people in the West arriving at a similar view. There have been more and more scholars in the West who involve themselves in studying our culture. ...This indicates clearly the direction in the evolution of humanity.[142]

Yen Fu was not alone in considering the war evidence of the moral bankruptcy of modern Western civilization. There was a profound change in the intellectual climate following the war. In a sense, the war generated another crisis in modern Chinese intellectual development. It severely undermined a sense of certainty about the direction of China's reform among intellectuals in the generation of 1890s and 1900s. A belief that the West did not represent the future of humanity became increasingly strong.

In response to this situation, Yen Fu and some veteran reformers wished to

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[140]Ibid.

[141]CYFW., vol. 2, p. 404; vol. 4, p. 690.

[142]CYFW., vol. 3, p. 690.

revive Confucianism. Liang Ch'i-ch'ao's writings during and after the war provided the most notable example of this thinking. Liang, a former radical reformer and ardent student of Western culture, published his influential `A Record of Impressions of Travels in Europe' in 1919. In this work, Liang described the devastating consequence of the war on European nations. Like Yen Fu, he attributed the war to the lack of spiritual ideals in a materialistic Western civilization. He considered only Chinese culture, which he called a `spiritual civilization', able to rescue humanity from the dominance of Western civilization. With familiar Confucian idealism, he wrote:

> Our people constitute one fourth of the world's population: we should assume one fourth of the responsibility for the happiness of mankind as a whole. If we do not meet this responsibility, then we will not be able to face our ancestors, nor our contemporaries, nor, in fact, ourselves. Our beloved youth! Attention! Forward march! On the other shore of the great sea are millions of men bewailing the bankruptcy of material civilization and crying out most piteously for help, waiting for us to come to their salvation![143]

After decades of the spread of the ideas of evolution and progress, and after decades of discrediting Confucianism, the endorsement of a return to Confucianism of Yen Fu and Liang Ch'i-ch'ao fell on deaf ears in the Chinese intellectual world. It is ironic that after two decades Yen Fu returned to the same position he vigorously denounced when he began to write in 1895. He returned the view that the West had only wealth and power and did not follow high moral principles as the Chinese did. He and his reformist contemporaries successfully fulfilled two great tasks in modern Chinese intellectual history: they first discredited traditional Confucianism and then discredited modern Western civilization. They left their intellectual successors with

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[143]Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, `Ou-yu hsin-ying lu'(A Record of Impressions of Travels in Europe), in his *Yin-ping-shih ho-chi*, (Collected Works of Liang Ch'i-ch'ao), vol. xxiii, pp. 35-38; the English translation is from Jerome B. Grieder, *Hu Shih and the Chinese Renaissance*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970, p. 135.

the task of finding a model which was superior to both traditional Chinese culture and modern Western culture. In this cultural vacuum in the wake of the First World War, Chinese intellectuals turned to leftist ideologies - Marxism, anarchism and various socialisms.

Chapter IV

The Principle of Utility and the Principle of Righteousness

I have shown how Yen Fu justified social and political changes by appealing to a universalistic vision of human evolution, and how this vision contained moralistic and utopian ideas. By doing so, I by no means suggest that Yen Fu was an unrealistic utopian. As Charlotte Furth has noted, in comparison to his contemporaries, such as K'ang Yu-wei and T'an Shih-t'ung, Yen Fu was more pragmatic and secular.[1] One of the most obvious, and indeed often quoted, evidence of Yen's pragmatism is his notion that the wealth and strength (*fu-ch'iang*) of the country instead of traditional Confucian moral principles should be regarded as a basis of China's social and political policies.

Yen Fu's pragmatic and secular perspective has been interpreted as stemming from social Darwinism. It has been argued, most forcefully by Schwartz, that social Darwinism led to Yen Fu's preoccupation with national power, and to the rational social and economic policies which would enhance national power.[2]

There are two problems with this assessment. First, as I have shown in great detail, the influence of Darwinism was instrumental more to Yen's universalistic and utopian vision than to his nationalistic ideas. Secondly, the link between Yen's nationalism and his pragmatism and secular perspectives is hardly sustainable. Nationalism does not necessarily lead to social and political reform based on a goal of enhancing the wealth and strength of the nation. As demonstrated by modern Chinese history, nationalism can also lead in other directions. The nationalism displayed in the Boxer Movement of 1900 led to a purely anti-foreign struggle, rather than to efforts aimed at reforming social and political policies to achieve greater wealth and strength. The nationalism displayed by revolutionaries of the 1900s led to the anti-Manchu revolution rather than to the pragmatic reconstruction of China's social and political systems to enrich and strengthen the country.

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[1]Charlotte Furth, `Intellectual Change: from the Reform Movement to the May Fourth Movement, 1895-1920', in *Cambridge History of China*, vol. 12, p. 328.

[2]Benjamin Schwartz, *In Search of Wealth and Power*, esp., pp. 237-47.

In the case of Yen Fu's concern for the wealth and strength of the nation, nationalism may be regarded as a stimulus for his advocacy of fundamental social and political changes. The nature of these changes, however, went far beyond nationalism. In a sense, Yen Fu's secular and pragmatic perspective reflected the beginning of a transition in modern China, a transition characterized by the loss of sacredness of the traditional value system and the emergence of rationalism in social and political thinking.[3]

A better understanding of this transition may be obtained if we analyze Yen Fu's utilitarian ideas. As we shall see, utilitarianism played a greater role in his thought than has been realized thus far. His critique of traditional Confucian moral philosophy, his criticism of radical thinking, and above all his pragmatic political ideas will be more clearly understood within the framework of his utilitarianism.

This chapter, therefore, provides an account of Yen Fu's utilitarian ideas. It will analyze Yen Fu's criticism of Confucian moral philosophy by his appeal to utilitarian principles. It will trace the origin of Yen's utilitarian ideas both from some ideas in traditional Chinese thought and from the influence of British utilitarianism in the nineteenth century. It will then discuss the role of utilitarianism in Yen Fu's thought. Finally, it will explore certain theoretical dilemmas in Yen Fu's commitment to utilitarianism.

I

Throughout Yen Fu's writings and translations, one persistent topic was his criticism of the traditionalism inherent in Confucianism. He made a great effort to address the questions of why Chinese culture, and Confucianism in particular, lacked ideas of progress and innovation, and how these ideas might be introduced into it.

Yen Fu might have read Tocqueville's comment on China in *Democracy in America* which he possessed in his personal library:

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[3]By rationalism, I mainly refer to Max Weber's instrumental rationalism. I will briefly discuss this conception later in this chapter.

> The Chinese, in following the track of their forefathers, had forgotten the reasons by which the latter had been guided. They still used the formula, without asking for its meaning, they retained the instrument, but they no longer possessed the art of altering or renewing it. The Chinese, then, had lost the power of change; for them to improve was impossible. They were compelled, at all times and in all points, to imitate their predecessors, lest they should stray into utter darkness, by deviating for an instant from the path already laid down for them.[4]

Nevertheless, even before Yen Fu acquired the Tocqueville's book in the mid-1900s, he had already made similar indictments of Chinese culture. In one of his essays in 1895, `On Our Salvation' (*Chiu-wang chueh-lun*), he made a violent assault on the Chinese intellectual tradition. He was extremely critical of the traditionalistic and formalistic features of Chinese culture, particularly as it was demonstrated by the civil examination system. The entire system, Yen Fu charged, had become a purely formalistic practice and lost its substance completely. So-called education became no more than memorizing teachings of Confucian sages. The end of education for everyone was to attain an official career by passing the civil examination. From an early age, students were forced to read Confucian classics which they could hardly understand. Some of them would later passed the civil examination through their capacity to memorize the classics. After they became officials, they knew nothing but Confucian teachings and they therefore would manage everything according to these teachings.[5] Chinese education, in Yen Fu's view, became something completely `useless' (*wu-yung*) and fruitless (*wu-shih*).[6] It shackled man's intellectual development, ruined man's morality and created a worthless intellectual class.

How could Chinese education have become such a worthless thing? Why did the Chinese tend to follow tradition rather than to attempt innovation? Yen Fu

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[4]Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, translated by Philips Bradley, New York: Alfred a Knopf, 1945, vol. ii, p. 55.

[5]CYFW, vol. 1, pp. 40-1.

[6]Ibid., p. 44.

suggested that the root of this system of thought could be traced to some fundamental features of Confucian moral philosophy. Most importantly, the Confucian emphasis on pursuing absolute moral goals regardless of practical consequences tended to lead toward a traditionalist orientation. `The greatest peril of our intellectual thinking', Yen asserted, `is pursuing high principles and ignoring practicality, advocating moral integrity and neglecting the real dangers.'[7]

Before we analyze Yen Fu's criticism of Confucianism, it might be helpful if we outline briefly the Confucian philosophy which he criticized. The foundation of Confucian moral philosophy is the distinction between righteousness (*yi*) and profit (*li*).[8] Righteousness is the *a priori* moral imperative and is contrasted with principles which involve the calculation of consequences. This doctrine constituted the basis of both personal morality and government policies.

There had been a long development within Confucianism before the distinction between righteousness and profit became rigid and the basis of the dominant moral doctrine. Righteousness was one of the most important concepts in the moral philosophy of Confucius.[9] It was, for Confucius, a moral imperative, *a priori*, independent of material interest and the calculation of consequences.[10] Yet, as Hsiao Kung-ch'uan indicated, Confucius did not completely disapprove of considerations of profit (*li*). There was, in the moral philosophy of Confucius, according to Schwartz, `a deep tension between a concept of personal morality based on purity of motive and intent and a concern with good sociopolitical "results" achieved by a statesman of great talent but little personal virtue.'[11] Confucius' sanction

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[7]Ibid., p. 43.

[8]*Yi* means `right' or `proper' and is often translated as `righteousness'. *Li* means `profit', `utility' or `interest'. In the following discussions, I will use these three English translations interchangeably.

[9]D. C. Lau, `Introduction' to his English translation of Confucius' *The Analects*, London: Penguin Books, 1979, p. 27.

[10]Ibid., p. 234.

[11]Benjamin Schwartz, *The World of Thought in Ancient China*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985, p. 110.

of the policies of Kuan Chung (683-642 B.C.), a statesman of Ch'i, not on the basis of his virtue or his motives, but on the basis of the results of his policies as benefiting the common people reveals the existence of a utilitarian element in his moral philosophy.[12] It is therefore not surprising that some late Confucians could appeal to the authority of Confucius in arguing for utilitarian principles.[13]

The idea of the distinction between righteousness and profit reached the turning point in Mencius (BC 371?-289?). In his writings, righteousness `becomes a dominating principle of virtue'.[14] In debates with Mo Tzu, his utilitarian rival, Mencius sharply distinguished the commitment to righteousness from the pursuit of profit. `It is essential', for Mencius, `that you do a thing because it is benevolent, because it is right, not like Mohists and Yangists on a calculation of benefit and harm.'[15] The touchstone of moral or immoral behaviour, for Mencius, was the commitment to righteousness as a motive of action, rather than any consideration of consequence. If people pursued their own interests in a utilitarian manner, there would be endless conflicts in human society. A good society `can be achieved only if we assume a human capacity for acting in terms of benevolence (*jen*) and righteousness (*yi*) as ends in themselves.'[16]

Starting from Mencius, Confucians usually shied away from speaking of profit. This could be clearly seen in Tung Chung Shu's (179-104 B.C.) famous remark: `follow righteousness without pursuing utility; illumine the way without calculating the successes'.[17] Nevertheless, it was not until the emergence of Neo-

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[12]Confucius, *The Analects*, Bk XIV, 16 & 17, trans. D. C. Lau, pp. 126-7.

[13]For instance, some Confucians in the Sung period appealed to the authority of Confucius to justify utilitarian principles. See Hoyt Cleveland Tillman, *Utilitarian Confucianism: Ch'en Liang's Challenge to Chu Hsi*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982.

[14]Ch'eng Chung-ying, `On *Yi* as a Universal Principle of Specific Application in Confucian Morality', in his *New Dimensions of Confucian and Neo-Confucian Philosophy*, New York: State University of New York Press, 1991, p. 237.

[15]A.C. Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*, La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1989, p. 114.

[16]Benjamin Schwartz, *The World of Thought in Ancient China*, p. 262.

[17]Quoted from Chan Wing-tsit, ed. *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*,

Confucianism that the distinction between righteousness and profit became a dominant doctrine of intellectual as well as political thinking.

The emergence of Neo-Confucianism in the eleventh century revived Confucianism as the dominant force in the Chinese intellectual world after its decay for centuries under challenges from Buddhism and Taoism. While Neo-Confucianism gave Confucianism a new complexion by developing metaphysics and cosmology, it, however, was responsible for what James Liu has characterized as the transition to the `inward-looking' in Chinese culture.[18] One illustration of this `inward-looking' tendency was that the distinction between righteousness and profit became even more rigid. The preoccupation of Neo-Confucian philosophy was with the question of how the Confucian gentleman cultivates himself. It paid little attention to `such practical problems as peasants, village life, townspeople, religious practices, social conditions, and the art of government'.[19] Two major schools of Neo-Confucianism, the school of Ch'eng I (1033-1107 A.D) and Chu Hsi (1130-1200 A.D.) and the school of Lu Hsiang-shan (1139-1193 A.D.) and Wang Yang-ming (1472-1529), while disagreeing on many important philosophical issues, nevertheless upheld Mencius' distinction between righteousness and profit as the basis of moral and political philosophy. This was particularly so for the Ch'eng-Chu school, which gained dominance over the Chinese intellectual world until the late nineteenth century. This school held that moral behaviour is that which follows the Heavenly principle (*t'ien-li*) rather than any consideration of practical consequences.[20] This is particularly important when people's desires and interests conflict with the Heavenly principle. Under such

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Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963, p. 275.

[18]In his study of the intellectual and political changes in the Sung, James Liu has argued that a fundamental cultural and political transformation occurred during the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The Chinese cultural pattern, once dynamic and out-reaching, `settled into a stable, internally reinforcing and therefore rigid one'. Chinese culture lost interest in innovation or renovation, and began to look backward and inward. (James T.C. Liu, *China Turning inward: Intellectual-Political Changes in the Early Twelfth Century*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988, p. vii.)

[19]James Liu, *China Turning inward*, p. 152.

[20]Chan Wing-tsit, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, p. 592.

circumstances, it is morally important to `pursue the heavenly principle and deny human desires'. Failure to do so will lead human beings to degenerate and become like animals.[21] It was from this viewpoint that Chu Hsi criticized Ch'en Liang (1143-1194), his utilitarian contemporary, for `being unable to distinguish between ethical principles and situational advantage.'[22]

In moral and political spheres, Chinese thought was dominated, without serious theoretical challenge, by the Confucian principle of righteousness until the late nineteenth century. The main concerns of Chinese elites were the moral achievements of both the individual and the state. The goal of the individual was self-cultivation and sagehood. The goal of the state was to maintain harmony rather than the material well-being of the country. Yen Fu once characterized the dominant conservative thought in his time as follows:

> For those conservatives, our classical teachings were not concerned with practical knowledge of managing a society, but concerned only with propriety *(Li)*.[23] The previous kings ran the Kingdom not by practical knowledge, but by following propriety. As Confucius says, `If a man is able to govern a state by observing the propriety and showing deference, what difficulties will he have in public life? If he is unable to govern a state by observing the propriety and showing deference, what good are propriety to him.'[24] The three dynasties of antiquity did not concern such things as wealth and strength of the

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[21]Li Tse-hou, `Lun sung-min li-hsueh' (On Neo-Confucianism), in his *Chung-kuo ku-tai ssu-hsiang shih-lun* (Essays on the history of the ancient Chinese philosophy), Peking: Commercial Press, 1985, p. 236.

[22]Hoyt Cleveland Tillman, *Utilitarian Confucianism: Ch'en Liang's Challenge to Chu Hsi*, p. 133.

[23]*Li* means rite, propriety or norm. I capitalize it in order to distinguish it from *li* as referring to profit, interest, utility. Those two words have an identical English pronunciation yet different characters in Chinese.

[24]The English translation of Yen Fu's quotation of Confucius is from *The Analects*, trans. D. C. Lau, Bk IV, 13, p. 74.

country....Put benevolence (*jen*) and righteousness (*yi*) first, and profit (*li*) second and then we will not need to strive to create wealth and our country will have a solid moral basis. ... Only in a time when the country's fortune is decaying and high principles (*tao*) cannot persuade people, will vulgar and self-publicizing people campaign for `wealth and strength'. ... They seem to pursue the country's interests, but the harm they inflict is even greater.[25]

It is interesting that Yen Fu here discussed the principle of righteousness and the principle of propriety in an almost identical tone. Students of Chinese philosophy now understand that these two principles were distinct from each other: the former required one to follow certain absolute moral principles, and the latter to follow tradition or certain established rules. As some recent studies have argued, the essence of Confucian morality was to pursue righteousness, rather than to follow tradition. In the course of pursuing righteousness and fulfilling sagehood, Confucianism did not prevent innovation in new conditions from age to age. The person's construal of righteousness `cannot be solely a matter of applying some externally derived norm...but must rather exercise his own judgment creatively in response to the uniqueness of his situation.'[26] `As something to be realized for oneself, sagehood was less of a defined concept than an experience subject to varying interpretations.'[27]

However, Yen Fu's failure to distinguish the principle of righteousness from the principle of propriety was not because he was unaware of the difference between the two, but because he thought that there were connections between them. Yen thought that since both the principle of righteousness and the principle of propriety stood in opposition to the use of practical knowledge in managing a society, there was

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[25]CYFW, vol. 1. pp. 116-7.

[26]David L. Hall and Roger T. Ames, *Thinking through Confucius*, New York: State University of New York Press, 1987, p. 95.

[27]Theodore de Bary, `Sagehood as a Secular and Spiritual Ideal in Tokugawa Neo-Confucianism', in de Bary and Irene Bloom ed., *Principle and Practicality: Essays in Neo-Confucianism and Practical Learning*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1979, p. 128.

a possibility that the principle of righteousness, if it was pushed to the extreme, could be transformed into the principle of propriety. In an essay written in English, Yen expressed this idea more clearly:

> In China, until very late, the form of government which had worked satisfactorily while remaining outside the general stream of world politics, proved incapable of readjustment to novel conditions, and became an anachronism more and more discredited as time went on. The great drawback of old Chinese political thought is that it never dared to pronounce bravely that the art of government - like the art of medicine or that of navigation, whose main point is to save the life of a patient, to guide a vessel safely through a storm - and morals are two separate things. Undoubtedly, the welfare of a nation greatly depends on moral character of its members greatly; but when living at a time when the old political order is collapsing and new problems both in State and Society are rising with dazzling rapidity, when we endeavour to interpret the logical meaning of events, to forecast the inevitable issues, and to formulate the rules which are now taking shape among the fresh forming conditions of national life, you cannot come to a sound conclusion with politics intermixed inextricably with Ethics or Moral Philosophy.[28]

Yen Fu's statement here is clear: the primary drawback of `old' Chinese political thought was it never `dared to pronounce bravely' that the aim of politics was not to follow any *a priori* moral principles, but to enhance `the welfare of a nation'. Thus the Chinese politicians dared not face reality and make decisions according to their understanding of reality. They could only, to use Tocqueville's phrase, `follow the track of their forefathers' `without asking for its meaning'.

To understand Yen Fu's diagnosis of the root of traditionalist thought in

[28]Yen Fu, `A Historical Account of Ancient Political Societies in China', in *The Chinese Social and Political Science Review*, vol. 1, No. 4 (December, 1916), pp. 22-3.

China, it would be helpful if we refer to Max Weber's classification of human actions. In his contrast between traditional society and modern society, Weber drew up a classification of social actions as his starting point. He classified various human actions into four types: 1) rational action in relation to a goal, or instrumental rationality; 2) rational action in relation to a value, or value rationality; 3) emotional action; 4) traditional action. Weber characterizes the modern West as dominated by actions of instrumental rationality.[29]

If we adopt Weber's classification, Yen Fu seemed to suggest that Confucianism originally was not of a traditionalist character. He, however, disliked the emphasis on value rationality rather than instrumental rationality in Confucian ethics. If moral principles became totally independent of any consideration of consequences and calculation of profit, these principles would prevent creative thinking and would simply confirm traditional, preconceived dogmas, thus leading to traditionalism.[30]

It was on these grounds that Yen Fu criticized orthodox Confucianism. He rarely criticized Confucius himself for being guilty of advocating high moral

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[29]Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, vol. 1, ed., by Guenther Roth & Claus Wittich, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978, pp. 24-5. Weber's classification has been widely cited in studies of Chinese thought. There is a widely shared belief that `the Confucian ethic did not contribute to that process of instrumental rationalization that fundamentally transformed the West and, by extension, the world at large.' (Tu Wei-ming, *Confucian Thought: Sagehood as Creative Transformation*, New York: State University of New York Press, 1985, p. 10; similar remarks are also found in Chang Hao, `Wan-ch'ing ssu-hsiang fa-chan shih-lun' [Development of the Late Ch'ing thought], in Chou Yang-shan & et al ed., *Wan-Ch'ing ssu-hsiang* [The Late Ch'ing thought], Taipei: Shih-pao wen-hua, 1980, p. 24.) However, there has been less agreement on whether Confucian ethics point to value rationality or traditionality. (see David L. Hall and Roger T. Ames, *Thinking through Confucius*, p. 95.)

[30]In generalizing Yen Fu's link of *a priori* moral philosophy with traditionalistic tendency, I have benefitted from reading John C. Harsanyi, `Morality and the Theory of Rational Behaviour'(in Amartya Sen & Bernard Williams ed., *Utilitarianism and beyond*, Cambridge University Press, 1982). Harsanyi argued that intuitionist moral philosophy will inevitably lead to the `uncritical acceptance of existing social practices' because intuitionist moral philosophy claims to discover the basic moral rules by direct intuition which `made any rational evaluation of such moral rules both impossible and unnecessary'. (p. 40)

principles regardless of reality. This reflected a general assumption in the Chinese intellectual world in the late imperial period that Confucius himself did not treat righteousness and profit as completely incompatible. Yen Fu held Mencius responsible for separating righteousness from profit. He quoted Mencius as saying that `all one needs is benevolence and righteousness. Why speak of profit?'[31] He also denounced Tung Chung-shu for his remark that one should `follow righteousness without pursuing utility; illumine the way without calculating the successes'.[32]

Nevertheless, the main target of Yen Fu's criticism was Neo-Confucianism which was the state orthodoxy in late imperial China. Just as James Liu identifies the Southern Sung (1127-1279 A.D.) as the crucial period for China turning inward, so did Yen Fu regard the Southern Sung as the turning point for the Chinese intellectual's attitude towards practical thinking. He complained that since the Southern Sung, Chinese thought had not made any progress. Various Confucian schools since the Southern Sung, such as Sung Learning and Han Learning, were all `useless' in Yen Fu's view. Such learning, Yen charged, indulged in empty talk about self-cultivation, human nature and moral principles, and did nothing to promote the wealth and strength of the country.[33]

Among Neo-Confucian thinkers, as Tillman has observed, Chu Hsi loomed large on Yen Fu's horizons, for the philosophy of Chu was the cornerstone of state orthodoxy in Yen's time.[34] In his essay `On Our Salvation' in 1895, which included his most radical denunciation of traditional Chinese learning, Yen denounced Chu Hsi repeatedly for pursuing useless doctrines.[35] In his commentary notes on Wang An-shih (1021-1086), a Sung reformer, Yen defended Wang's policies against the criticism of Chu Hsi. Commenting on Chu's charge that Wang `pursued wealth and

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[31]Yen Fu, *Yuan-fu* (A translation of Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*), vol. 1, p. 91.

[32]Ibid.

[33]CYFW, vol. 1, p. 44.

[34]Hoyt Tillman, `Yen Fu's Utilitarianism in Chinese Perspective', in Paul A. Cohen & Merle Goldman ed., *Ideas Across Cultures*, p. 65.

[35]CYFW, vol.1, pp. 43, 44.

military strength only,' Yen angrily asked:

> To manage a nation after the three dynasties of antiquity, if you do not put wealth and strength first, which should be put first? In a time when the people's livelihood is in difficulty and the country is faced with the danger of perishing, yet you still talk about morality and custom, high principle it might be, but is it practical?[36]

Yen Fu was also highly critical of the Lu-Wang school of idealism, another major school of Neo-Confucianism. He accused Lu Hsiang-shan and Wang yang-ming of putting too much stress on Mencius' `spontaneously moral knowing' *(liang chih)*.[37] As a consequence, Yen remarked, Lu-Wang regarded moral principles as some imperatives stemming from universal human consciousness. The dangers of their doctrines for intellectual thinking as well for the country were enormous.[38] The influence of the Lu-Wang philosophy, according to Yen Fu, gave the intellectual perspectives of Chinese elites both their high sense of self-esteem and their neglect of reality[39] They lived under illusions that China was a rich and powerful country and that foreigners were all barbarians without bothering to test these illusions in reality.[40] This framework was responsible both for the Ming dynasty perishing and for the weakness of the Ch'ing dynasty.[41]

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[36]CYFW, vol. 4, p. 1152.

[37]CYFW, vol. 1, p. 45.

[38]Ibid., pp. 44-5.

[39]Ibid., p. 45.

[40]Ibid.

[41]Ibid.

II

As Yen Fu identified the failure to consider consequences in Confucian moral philosophy as the main deficiency of Confucian traditionalism, it follows that he would find utilitarianism attractive. To use Tocqueville's phrase, Yen Fu saw `the power of change' in utilitarianism.

There have been disputes on whether, in forming his utilitarian ideas, Yen Fu was influenced by some schools of thought in traditional China, particularly some rivals of Confucianism. In the study by Schwartz, Yen Fu's criticisms of orthodox Confucian moral principle were interpreted largely as derived from the social Darwinism of Spencer, or, British utilitarianism in the framework of social Darwinism. He saw little or no connection between Yen Fu's utilitarian ideas and traditional Chinese thought.[42] This assessment of Schwartz, however, has been recently questioned by Hoyt Tillman. In his critique of Schwartz's account of the origins of Yen Fu's utilitarianism, Tillman raised the issue of the `continuity in the Chinese utilitarian problematique'.[43] He found that there were recurring utilitarian ideas in the history of Chinese thought, from Mo Tzu, Ch'eng Liang to Yen Fu. He suggested that Mo Tzu and Ch'eng Liang might have exerted some influence on Yen Fu's utilitarian thinking.[44] Although Tillman did not provide any concrete evidence for his speculations, the issue he raised merits careful study.

There were recurring challenges to the Confucian principle of righteousness in the history of Chinese thought. In the classic period, two main rivals of Confucianism, Mohism and Legalism, developed certain utilitarian principles to contest Confucian moral principles.

Mohism was the earliest philosophical school to challenge the Confucian moral principle of righteousness. Mo Tzu (480?-390? B.C.), the founder of Mohism, laid down three tests by which a doctrine was to be judged: `its origin, its validity,

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[42]Benjamin Schwartz, *In Search of Wealth and Power*, pp. 122-9.

[43]Hoyt Tillman, `Yen Fu's Utilitarianism in Chinese Perspective', p. 83.

[44]Ibid.

and its applicability'.[45] By `origin', Mo Tzu referred to `the deeds of the sage kings of antiquity'; by `validity', he referred to `the evidence of the eyes and ears of the people'; by `applicability', he referred to `whether, when the theory is put into practice in the administration, it brings benefit to the state and the people.'[46] To elaborate his third test, Mo Tzu further pointed out:

> It is the business of the benevolent man to seek to promote what is beneficial to the world, to eliminate what is harmful, and to provide a model for the world. What benefits men he will carry out; what does not benefit men he will leave alone.[47]

This third test certainly touched the essence of utilitarianism.[48] Yet there are reasons for hesitating to call Mo Tzu a utilitarian. First, as Dennis M. Ahern has argued, the principle of utility in Mo Tzu was only one of the important criteria, rather than the final criterion, in determining the rightness of actions. This kind of utilitarianism was called by Ahern `utilitarianism in the weak sense' in contrast with `utilitarianism in the strong sense' in the modern West.[49] Secondly, utilitarianism in Mo Tzu was more often than not treated as a secondary principle in serving higher moral goals. The benefit or harm which Mo Tzu utilized to judge the rightness of actions usually did not refer to the agent of actions, but to the majority of people who made up mankind. To pursue benefit in Mo Tzu's sense always meant to benefit mankind even at the expense of the interest of the actor. As Graham has observed,

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[45]B. Watson translated, *Mo Tzu: Basic Writings*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1963, p. 117.

[46]Ibid., pp. 117-8.

[47]Ibid., p. 110.

[48]Fung Yu-lan, *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, vol. 1, trans. into English by D. Bodde, second ed., Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952, p. 87; A.C.Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*, pp. 39-41.

[49]Dennis M. Ahern, `Is Mo Tzu a Utilitarian?' *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, vol. 3, No. 2 (March, 1976), pp. 185-93.

`Mohist calculations of benefit and harm are on behalf of all, guided by the principle of `Concern for Everyone' (*chien-ai*).'[50] `Concern for Everyone' was defined by Mo Tzu `almost in terms of Kant's principle of treating all men as ends in themselves.'[51] Mo Tzu `never treats *li* [benefit] as the satisfaction of desire or as pleasure or happiness'. In this sense, `Mo Tzu's ethical structure is much closer to that of Confucius than it is to that of either Bentham or Mill.'[52]

Despite the ambiguous features of Mohist utilitarianism, some Chinese thinkers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century did rediscover the value of utilitarianism in Mohism when they advocated utilitarianism in criticizing Confucian moral principles.[53] One notable example was Liang Ch'i-ch'ao who regarded Mohism as `perfect utilitarianism'.[54] In the case of Yen Fu, however, the influence of Mohist utilitarianism was hardly visible. Surprisingly, while Yen Fu left many comments on Confucianism, Taoism, Legalism and other Chinese philosophical schools, he did not write anything of any length on Mohism. He only mentioned Mohism on a few occasions in which Mohism was referred to as `socialism',[55] and `altruism'.[56] One possible explanation for the lack of influence of Mohist utilitarianism on Yen Fu is that Yen Fu regarded Mo Tzu largely as a moralist who advocated `altruism' and `socialism' and therefore did not count him as utilitarian.

From Yen Fu's writings, it is clear that the influence of Legalism on the formation of his utilitarian ideas was significant. Legalism was one of the most

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[50]A.C. Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*, p. 41.

[51]Benjamin Schwartz, *The World of Thought in Ancient China*, p. 146.

[52]Chad Hansen, `Mo Tzu: Language Utilitarianism', *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, vol. 16, No. 3/4 (Sept.-Dec., 1989, p. esp., pp. 356-70.

[53]On the revival of interest in classical Mohism in the late Ch'ing, see Chang Hao, *Chinese Intellectuals in Crisis: Search for Order and Meaning (1890-1911)*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987, pp. 9-10.

[54]Chang Hao, *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and Intellectual Transition in China: 1890-1907*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971, p. 209.

[55]CYFW, vol. 1, p. 126.

[56]Yen Fu, `A Historical Account of Ancient Political Societies in China', p. 20.

important schools of social and political thought in Chinese intellectual history. It reached intellectual maturity during the fourth and third centuries B. C., when `as the intensifying struggle between the states approached its final crisis, rulers were hardly pretending any longer to listen to the moralizing of Confucians and Mohists, they preferred more practical teachers of statecraft.'[57] As Ch'eng Chung-ying has observed, `there is a genuine antagonism between Legalism and Confucianism, in virtue of their basic orientations and philosophical convictions'.[58] The basic feature of Legalism, in contrast to Confucianism, is that it rejected any traditional or moral considerations in the making of social and political policy. The authority of the ancient kings and the virtues of benevolence and righteousness had no place in Legalist thought. The only basis of social and political policies, for Legalism, was their utility. As Han Fei Tzu expressed clearly, `enlightened kings understand reality and eliminate useless [policies]. They never talk about righteousness and benevolence and never listen to so-called scholars.'[59] The perspective for judging utility for the Legalists was largely that of the rulers. The primary concerns of the Legalist theorists were to find effective means for rulers to control bureaucracy and people, and to enhance the wealth and strength (*fu-ch'iang*) of the state and therefore to survive the furious competition of the other states during the period of the Warring States.[60]

The influence of Legalism on intellectual and political developments in China was enormous. One of the striking phenomena of Chinese intellectual development

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[57]A.C. Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*, p. 267. Most prominent figures in the Legalist school, except for its great synthesizer, Han Fei-tzu (?-233 B.C.), were famous ministers in certain of the states, which included Kuan Chung (?-645 B.C.), chief minister in Ch'i, Shang Yang (?-338 B.C.), chief minister of Ch'in, and Shen Pu-hai (?-337 B.C.), chief minister in Han.

[58]Ch'eng Chung-ying, `Legalism versus Confucianism: a Philosophical Appraisal', in his *New Dimensions of Confucianism and Neo-Confucian Philosophy*, p. 312.

[59]Han Fei Tzu, *Han Fei Tzu ch'i-shih* (The completed works of Han Fei Tzu), ed. by Ch'en Ch'i-yu, Peking: Chung-hua, 1958, p. 20.

[60]For an account of the Legalist political ideas, see Vitaly A. Rubin, `The Theory and Practice of a Totalitarian State: Shang Yang and Legalism', in his *Individual and State in Ancient China: Essays on Four Chinese Philosophers*, trans. Steven I. Levine, New York: Columbia University Press, 1976.

was, as Graham observed, `its success in integrating diverse tendencies so that they become socially cohesive'.[61] This phenomenon was exemplified most clearly in the co-existence of Confucianism and Legalism in the development of Chinese political ideas and practices. While Confucian moralism and humanism generally dominated Chinese political ideas for millennia, Legalist rationalism provided for the rulers `a rational statecraft with the techniques to organize an empire of unprecedented size'.[62] Particularly whenever there were external or internal crises, Legalist rationalism always formed the theoretical basis for advocating social and political reforms based on the achievement of wealth and military strength in the state. Notably, the reform movement led by Wang An-shih (1021-1086) and utilitarian ideas represented by Ch'en Liang and others in the Sung period when China faced serious external and internal crises can be regarded as `semi-Legalistic' in nature, to use Metzger's term.[63]

China's modernization efforts in the second half of the nineteenth century were largely driven by the revival of the Legalist emphasis on `wealth and strength'.[64] As early as the 1840s, Wei Yuan expressed a belief in that `wealth and strength as not only inevitable but also desirable and wholly valid ideals for government'.[65] He put greater emphasis on economic and military development rather than on the achievement of moral goals. The `Self-strengthening' movement during the 1860s and

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[61]A.C. Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*, p. 6.

[62]Both Benjamin Schwartz and A. C. Graham have suggested that the Legalist tendency of pursuing the wealth and strength rather than moral ideals entailed elements of modern rationalism and behavioursim. The `dynamic goal-oriented nature' embodied in Legalism, they argued, is indeed almost `rationalistic in the Weberian sense of instrumental rationalism'. (Benjamin Schwartz, *The World of Thought in Ancient China*, pp. 328, 347; A.C. Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*, p. 269.)

[63]Thomas Metzger, *Escape from Predicament*, p. 52. For discussions of the emergence of Sung utilitarianism, see Hoyt Tillman, *Utilitarian Confucianism: Ch'en Liang's Challenge to Chu Hsi.*

[64]Chang Hao, `The Intellectual Context of Reform', in Paul A. Cohen & John E. Schrecker ed., *Reform in Nineteenth-Century China*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976, pp. 145-6.

[65]Peter M. Mitchell, `The Limits of Reformism: Wei Yuan's Reaction to Western Intrusion', in *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 6, No. 2, (1972), p. 179.

1870s was undertaken in the name of the wealth and strength of the nation.[66]

Yen Fu's concern with the wealth and strength of the country, to a great degree, was the continuation of this Legalist tradition. In fact, Yen frequently acknowledged the intellectual link between his ideas and Legalism. He found a great similarity between Legalism and modern Western utilitarianism in the sphere of public decision-making. Both Legalism and Western utilitarianism, for Yen Fu, would base their social and political policies on the achievement of wealth and strength of a country rather than on *a priori* moral principles.[67] In his `Political Lectures', he wrote:

> In the past, whenever a society was to have some change, there would always be persons either in high administration or among the literati to advocate that actions of the state should aim at protecting the people's interest. They would challenge patriarchal customs and religion. Those people were bound to be bitterly hated by conservatives and even to be executed as in the case of Lord Shang in the Chin Dynasty. This is not only the case in China, but also in the West. In the West, the advocates of such a doctrine are called utilitarianists.[68] Utilitarianism can be translated into Chinese as the *kung-li* doctrine. No matter how much people dislike this doctrine, there are times, however, when the principles of a country have to be changed for the country to survive in the face of various crises, when a country faces strong challenges from outside and serious riots inside, when people's lives are in danger and a country faces the threat of being partitioned or overtaken, ... a country has to achieve wealth and strength to survive. It is a great obstacle to a country's wealth and strength to bind people with patriarchal customs

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[66]Kuo Ting-yee & Liu Kwang-ching, `Self-strengthening: the Pursuit of Western Technology', in *Cambridge History of China*, vol. 11, ed., by John K. Fairbank & Liu Kwang-ching, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980, pp. 491-2.

[67]CYFW, vol. 1, p. 117.

[68]The English word `utilitarianists' was used by Yen Fu originally.

and religion.[69]

While Yen Fu furiously denounced orthodox Confucianism as `useless' and `impractical', he praised Legalism as useful in a time of external and internal crises:

> If we speak of saving China from crises, only the doctrines of Sheng [Sheng Pu-hai] and Han [Han Fei-tzu] may be applicable....As seen from the history of both China and foreign countries, are there any achievements of a strong country not due to the adoption of Legalism? Kuan [Kuan Chun] and Shang [Shang Yang] certainly belonged to outstanding Legalists. Other statesmen [who were successful], such as Chao She, Wu Ch'i, Wang Mang, Chu-ke Liang, the Hsuan Emperor of the Han and T'ai-tsung of the Tang all had certain knowledge of Legalism and followed its doctrines. Those rulers who lost or weakened their states, were, by and large, all good Confucians.[70]

Yen Fu held in high opinion some reform efforts in Chinese history which were Legalist in nature. He regarded Shang Yang and Wang Mang as important reformers. He particularly praised Wang An-shih's reform as having achieved greater success than those of Shang Yang and Wang Mang.[71] In his commentary notes to *Wang Ching-kung shih* (Selected poems of Wang An-shih), Yen noted that the most important event in the history of China which scholars should understand thoroughly was the reform initiated by Wang An-shih.[72] He called Wang the leader of `the great reforming party' which `endeavoured to solve several burning political problems of that time'.[73] He praised the aim of Wang's reform in terms of benefiting the state and

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[69]CYFW, vol. 5, p. 1265.

[70]Ibid., vol. 3, p. 620.

[71]Ibid., vol. 4, p. 1150.

[72]Ibid.

[73]Yen Fu, `A Historical Account of Ancient Political Societies in China', p. 22.

people. He showed great antipathy to the orthodox Confucianists' criticisms of Wang's reform, and repudiated them as biased.[74]

III

It should be noted, however, that Yen Fu's utilitarian ideas went beyond the Legalist notion of the wealth and strength of the state. He drew significantly from modern Western utilitarian ideas and, to a great extent, transformed the nature of Legalist rationalism.

The influence of Western utilitarianism on Yen Fu came mainly from some British utilitarians. In comparison to his knowledge of Western evolutionary ideas, Yen Fu's knowledge of Western utilitarianism was limited indeed. Nevertheless, he did have a general awareness of the antithesis between two main rivals in modern moral philosophy: utilitarianism and intuitionism and was cognizant of the basic ideas and arguments of utilitarianism.[75] He mentioned Jeremy Bentham as an important philosopher in the utilitarian school and was impressed by Bentham's `honourable intention' of `pursuing the greatest happiness of the greatest number'.[76] He understood Bentham as an economic liberal who opposed the interference of government in controlling interest rates. Bentham was also regarded as the first jurist to write a specialized treatise on international law,[77] and believed in the `cognoscibility of laws'.[78] In the early 1900s, Bentham's name and ideas were introduced into the Chinese intellectual world by some Chinese exiles and students in Japan. Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, an important figure in the reform movement of 1898, who took refuge in Japan afterwards, wrote an influential essay on Bentham's utilitarian doctrine and adopted

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[74]Ibid.

[75]Yen Fu, *Yuan-fu* (A Translation of Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*), vol.1, pp. 5, 12.

[76]Ibid, vol. 2, p. 347.

[77]Yen Fu, *Fa-yi* (A translation of Montesquieu's *The Spirit of the Laws*), vol. I, Bk 1, p. 7.

[78]CYFW, vol. 2, p. 328.

some of Bentham's ideas in repudiating the Confucian principle of righteousness.[79] Although Yen Fu did not write anything substantial about Bentham, some of his discussions of utilitarian principles, as will be shown, bore resemblance to Bentham's ideas. It seems likely that he read some works of Bentham, or at least some secondary commentary on him.

Yen Fu drew utilitarian ideas from Mill's *On Liberty* and *A System of Logic* when he rendered these works into Chinese. As I will show later, his utilitarian justification of liberty and democracy reflected the influence of Mill.

The most important influence on the formation of Yen Fu's utilitarian ideas, however, came from Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* which Yen also translated into Chinese. This may sound unusual given that Smith's moral philosophy was not utilitarian, to the extent that he believed that he could explain all the judgments which we should normally call moral by reference to the various operations of sympathy.[80] Yen Fu was aware of this facet of Smith's moral philosophy.[81] Yet the principle of utility did play a role in Smith's theory. The whole system of Smith's economic theory can not be understood without reference to the principle of utility. Smith's hypothesis of the self-interested individual as well as his justification of the free market by the famous theory of `the invisible hand' were in accordance with some basic assumptions of the principle of utility.[82] This utilitarian element in Smith impressed Yen Fu very much. In fact, one of the reasons behind Yen Fu's translation of *The Wealth of Nations*, according to Yen's friend and mentor Wu Ju-lun, was his belief that it was a

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[79]Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, `Lo-li chu-i t'ai-tou Pien-hsin chih hsueh-shuo' (The doctrine of Bentham, the master of utilitarianism), in his *Yin-ping-shih ho-chi*, (Collected Works of Liang Ch'i-ch'ao), vol. v, Shanghai, 1932, pp. 30-47. For Liang's views on Bentham and utilitarianism generally, see Chang Hao, *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and Intellectual transition in China*, pp. 206-14.

[80]T.D. Campbell, *Adam Smith's Science of Morals*, London: Allen & Unwin, 1971, p. 89.

[81]CYFW, vol. 5, p. 1347.

[82]There has been disagreement on whether the principle of sympathy in Smith's moral philosophy is compatible with that of utility in his economic theory. See, D. Winch, *Adam Smith's Politics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978, p. 10.

book which discussed *li* (utility). Yen Fu realized that `unless we make every effort to change our mental habit of shunning all talk of *li*,...our wealth will remain under-developed....If *li* is taboo, there can be no science of economics.'[83]

One of the most important ideas Yen Fu learned from the British utilitarians was the consequentialist principle which is regarded by Anthony Quinton as the core of utilitarianism.[84] Like the British utilitarians, Yen Fu held that the approval or disapproval of an action should be based on consideration of the consequences of the action rather than on whether the action is intrinsically good or bad. For Yen, no action is intrinsically righteous. Only those actions which benefit the actors can be properly called righteous. Based on this idea, Yen Fu repudiated the sharp separation between righteousness and profit in Confucian moral philosophy. He wrote in one of his commentaries in the translation of *The Wealth of Nations*:

> The cleavage between righteousness and profit (*yi-li*) has been most detrimental to the advance of civilization. Mencius states, `All one needs is benevolence and righteousness *(jen-i)*. Why speak of profit.' Tung Chung-Shu asserts, `act righteously and do not scheme to advance your interests. Follow the principles (*tao*) and do not calculate profit.' The ancient teachings of both East and West all draw a sharp line between righteousness and profit. Their intentions were most sublime but their understanding of human civilization and principles were superficial. In consequence, their doctrines always brought harm to genuine benevolence and righteousness.[85]

Moreover, like the British utilitarians, Bentham in particular, Yen Fu interpreted the notion of *li* (profit or utility) in terms of pleasure for an actor. He

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[83]Wu Ju-Lun, `Hsü' (Preface) to Yen Fu's *Yuan-fu* (A Translation of Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*), p. 2.

[84]Anthony Quinton, *Utilitarian Ethics*, London: Macmillan, 1973, p. 1.

[85]Yen Fu, *Yuan-fu* (A Translation of Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*), vol. 1, p. 77.

argued that human nature (*jen-tao*) prefers pleasure to pain. Without exception, man always thought that 'happiness is good, pain is evil'.[86] 'No matter how the world will change, man always strives to avoid pain and pursue pleasure'.[87] A moral judgment of the good or evil of an action, therefore, should be based on whether that action brings pleasure to the party concerned. He wrote:

> Somebody may ask: should the way of man (*jen-tao*) follow the principle of pleasure (*le*) or pain (*k'u*), or the principle of good or evil? My answer is that it should follow the principle of pleasure or pain. The good or evil of an act is determined by the extent to which it brings pleasure or pain. ...All human behaviour aims at the pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pain. It is very clear that only those things which bring pleasure can be properly called good. In conclusion the good and evil of an act is determined by the extent of pleasure or pain it produces.[88]

This idea of Yen Fu is strikingly similar to Bentham's famous statement about utilitarianism:

> By the principle of utility is meant that principle which approves or disapproves of every action whatever according to the tendency which it appears to have to augment or diminish the happiness of the party whose interest is in question: or, what is the same thing in other words, to promote or to oppose that happiness.[89]

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[86]CYFW, vol. 5, p. 1359.

[87]Ibid., p. 1355.

[88]CYFW, vol. 5, p. 1359.

[89]Jeremy Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, ed., J. H. Burns & H. L. A. Hart, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970, chp. I:2, pp. 11-2.

It should be noted, however, that there were significant differences between Yen Fu's principle of utility (*li*) and Bentham's principle of utility. Those differences were involved in the issues of, first, whether the principle of utility should be applied to all spheres of human action or only a proportion of human action, and secondly, whether the principle of utility is the ultimate basis for moral judgment, or is only one of the bases for moral judgment.

The principle of utility in Bentham is applied to `every action whatsoever' - `not only of every action of a private individual, but of every measure of government.'[90] In other words, Bentham's utilitarianism, and Western utilitarianism generally, functions on the one hand as a theory of personal morality, and on the other hand as a theory of public choice, or of criteria applicable to social and political decisions.[91] The principle of utility in Yen Fu, by contrast, hardly played any significant role in his views on personal morality. It applied primarily to the area of public choice, namely social and political decisions. As we will show shortly, Yen Fu's views on personal morality were by and large shaped by Confucianism. Indeed, he did not demonstrate any profound interest in developing a new personal morality. His primary concern was focused on the issue of how China as a country, or the Chinese as a people, should reform their culture and institutions in order to build a strong, prosperous and well regulated country. One of the most often used phrase which exemplified his concern was the Legalist phrase, `the wealth and strength' of China.

Yet, one should not simply identify Yen Fu's notion of wealth and strength with that of Legalism. While Legalists advocated wealth and strength as the basis of governmental policies, they were primarily concerned with the necessity of strengthening the power of the state, or more accurately, the rulers. They had little concern with the welfare of the people at large. As we will show later, Yen Fu was highly critical of Legalism for its treatment of the interests of the rulers as the end of politics. When Yen Fu used the phrase wealth and strength, he was concerned not

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[90]Ibid.

[91]Amartya Sen & Bernard Williams ed., *Utilitarianism and beyond*, `Introduction', Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982, p. 1.

only with the strength of the Chinese nation, but more importantly, with the welfare of the people. `Wealth and strength', as Yen stated clearly, `is simply to benefit all people in the country'.[92] To benefit all people, Yen Fu wrote, `is to achieve the greatest happiness of the greatest number as remarked by the British philosopher Bentham'.[93] Schwartz seemed to be unaware of this difference when he interpreted Yen Fu's notion of wealth and strength largely as manifestations of his nationalism and emphasis on state power.[94]

Another difference between Yen Fu's principle of utility and that of Bentham is on the issue of whether the principle of utility is the ultimate principle for moral judgment. For Bentham, and for Western utilitarians generally, the principle of utility was, either directly or indirectly, the highest principle on which the rightness of acts, policies, decisions, and choices was based.[95] Yen Fu, by contrast, was far from consistent on this matter. Sometimes, he appeared to regard the principle of utility as the basis on which the rightness of acts should be judged. As we have quoted above, he expressed clearly that `the good or evil of an act is determined by the extent to which it brings pleasure or pain' to the actor. In this sense, he was close to the position of `act utilitarianism'. However, in many other cases, Yen Fu criticized the

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[92]CYFW, vol. 1, p. 27.

[93]CYFW, vol. 4, p. 885.

[94]Maurice Meisner is one of the earliest scholars to advise the difference between the traditional usage of the phrase `wealth and power' and its usage in some modern writers. See his, *Li Ta-chao and the Origins of Chinese Marxism*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967, pp. 8-9.

[95]I use `either directly or indirectly' with in mind the difference between `act utilitarianism' and `rule utilitarianism'. Bentham's utilitarianism has been generally regarded as a form of `act utilitarianism' which holds that an act is right if its consequences are at least as good as those of any other alternative. `Rule utilitarianism', by contrast, holds that an act is right if it confirms to a rule the general following of which would have (or has) good consequences. For a discussion of those two forms of utilitarianism, see J.J.C. Smart, `A Outline of a System of Utilitarian Ethics', in J.J.C. Smart & Bernard William, ed. *Utilitarianism: for and against*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973, pp. 4-9. See also Paul Kelly, *Utilitarianism and Distributive Justice: Jeremy Bentham and the Civil Law*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990.

notion that `morality is nothing but a matter of self-interest and the pursuit of profit'.[96] Yen's favourite notion was that `the combination of righteousness and profit' (*yi-he-li*) should be the basis for moral judgments.[97]

However, Yen Fu was never able to spell out clearly what he meant by a `combination of righteousness and profit'. There were at least two implications in his use of the phrase. On the one hand, he implied that moral, social and political principles should not be derived from some *a priori* moral imperatives. Instead, they should be based on the people's experience that following such principles had good consequences. Moreover, these principles should be continually tested and revised according to the consequential principle. On the other hand, Yen Fu seemed to suggest that an act should be judged by a dual criterion: the principle of righteousness and the principle of utility. As we will show shortly, Yen Fu did not completely abandoned the Confucian notion that there were some moral principles which were imperative and should be followed.

In treating the principle of utility as only one of the important criteria in judging the rightness of an act, Yen Fu reminded us of the utilitarianism of Mohism which has been called `utilitarianism in the weak sense'. Nevertheless, utilitarianism in Yen Fu played a much stronger role than in Mohism. Although the principle of utility was not always the ultimate principle for social and political judgments in Yen Fu, it was not a secondary principle in serving higher moral goals either. Unlike Mohists, Yen Fu clearly interpreted the principle of utility as the satisfaction of people's pleasure or happiness. Yen Fu might not treat the satisfaction of the people's desires for happiness as the only criterion for judging the rightness of an act, he nevertheless treated it as a necessary criterion for such a judgment.

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[96]CYFW, vol. 1, pp. 100-1.

[97]CYFW, vol. 4, pp. 858-9; vol. 5, p. 1359.

IV

Granted all these inconsistencies, the principle of utility did play a significant role in Yen Fu's thought. It was accepted as a critical principle in challenging the authority of orthodox Confucianism; it formed one of the bases of his criticism of radicalism; it underlay his proposals for China's social and political reforms; and above all, it underlay his sanction of the individual's pursuit of self-interest.

As indicated before, Confucianism had long been upheld `as an inviolate body of secular truth' similar to religion. The sacredness of Confucianism led the Chinese elites to shy away from innovation. One of the important objectives of Yen Fu's whole intellectual effort was to destroy the sacredness of Confucianism and to introduce rational thinking into Chinese thought. Utilitarianism, more than any other theory which Yen Fu and his contemporaries adopted from the West, including evolutionary theory, undermined the very foundation of the sacredness of Confucianism. Although, as we have just shown, Yen Fu did not always treat the principle of utility as the highest principle in judging the rightness of an act, he at least treated it as a necessary criterion for moral judgment. This was sufficient to bring Confucianism to a test of the consequentialist principle. Confucianism could no longer be taken for granted as moral truth. It had to be judged, as any other moral and political doctrine, by the consequences which the devotion to it might bring to the parties concerned. If it can not produce happiness, it has to be desecrated, no matter how noble it seems to be. As Yen Fu declared boldly `to develop our nation and civilization, we have to wipe out all useless principles and utterly change our society.'[98] `It is a great obstacle to a nation's wealth and strength to bind people with patriarchal customs and religion.'[99]

The role of utilitarianism in Yen Fu's challenge of the authority of Confucianism bears similarity to the role played by utilitarianism in some other non-European countries in the nineteenth century when those countries underwent a transition from being traditional societies to modern ones. In Japan in the late

[98]CYFW, vol.5, p. 1265.

[99]Ibid.

nineteenth century, as Sandra Davis observed, utilitarianism was regarded as an effective weapon in challenging Confucianism and as a foundation for the new order to be built. `Utilitarianism... offered a modern, rational justification for political and social change.'[100] In India, Spain and Latin America, utilitarianism was introduced as a `secular and modernizing ideology' to which liberals appealed for legitimation in their conflict with the force of conservatism.[101]

In addition to depriving Confucianism of sacredness, utilitarianism also provided Yen Fu with weapons for combating the radicalism of his time. Radicalism emerged strongly in the beginning of this century in China. One of the fundamental characteristics of radicalism was its enthusiastic embrace of certain principles imported from the West, such as freedom, equality, democracy, without either understanding their meanings, or considering the consequences of putting them into practice in China. As we will show later, Yen Fu's criticism of radicalism was partly based on the consequentialist principle. Yen Fu persistently charged radicals of being guilty of basing their political doctrines on *a priori* moral principles. For instance, he criticized K'ang Yu-wei and Liang Ch'i-ch'ao's radical reform plans as being concerned only with the rightness of their actions and ignoring the consequences they will bring about. Yen wrote:

> In the matter of political change, there is great complicity. It is often the case that something seems to be right, but its consequences are bad; something is praised by the people, but it will cause harm to them. Therefore, a person with foresight and sagacity is able to understand the difficulty of politics and to avoid reckless actions. ... K'ang and Liang, on the contrary, only saw one side of the matter and acted recklessly.[102]

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[100]Sandra T. W. Davis, *Intellectual Change and Political Development in Early Modern Japan*, London: Associated University Press, 1980, p. 16.

[101]John Dinwiddy, *Bentham*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989, p. 116.

[102]CYFW, vol. 3, pp. 631-2.

Yen Fu's own proposals for cultural, social, economic and political reforms, to a great degree, were based on the principle of utility. As we will show in greater detail later, Yen's arguments for individual liberty, a free-market economy, democracy, and gradualism were largely utilitarian. One of the most striking features in Yen Fu's discussions of China's social, economic and political reforms was his rejection of dogmatism. He insisted that one should not base his political arguments on *a priori* principles, either from Confucianism or from the modern West. Utilitarianism underlay Yen's pragmatism.

Secondly, Yen Fu's appreciation of modern Western science and technology, and his advocacy of educational reform were based on the principle of utility. The primary charge Yen Fu made against traditional Chinese education was that the content of the education was `useless' and `impractical'.[103] He held that the Confucian emphasis on moral improvement and perfection rather than on material benefit was responsible for China's underdevelopment of science and technology. `What the ancient Chinese called learning', wrote Yen Fu, `is nothing beyond Politics, Ethics, Moral Philosophy, Metaphysics, Literature and some Fine Arts'.[104] `Nature was never scientifically studied in this country; on the contrary, they rather despised it and considered it unworthy for the learning of a great man who had nobler aspirations in perfecting himself and improving mankind. In my humble opinion this is one of the very causes of China's present weakness.'[105] Based on this understanding, Yen Fu advocated educational reforms. He was one of the pioneers who argued against the traditional examination system, the core of the traditional educational system. He advocated changes in the content of education. In his early writings, he argued that all traditional learning should be abolished, at least for the time being, and should be replaced by Western learning.[106] He showed great enthusiasm for Western science and technology. He was also eager to introduce Western social, economic and political

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[103]CYFW, vol. 1, pp. 43-4.

[104]Yen Fu, `A Historical Account of Ancient Political Societies in China', p. 18.

[105]Ibid.

[106]CYFW, vol. 1, p. 44.

sciences into China. Those natural and social sciences, he believed, were necessary for developing a wealthy and strong modern China.

V

Utilitarianism was accepted by Yen Fu not only to effect social, political and educational reforms, but also to justify the satisfaction of individual self-interest. This facet of Yen Fu's thought has not been fully accounted by studies thus far.

The individual's interest was largely neglected in Confucianism. Confucianism put primary emphasis on *kung* (public) rather than *ssu* (individual's interest). The pursuit of the individual's interest was equated with selfishness in Confucianism. What Confucianism emphasized was an individual's obligations rather than his rights and prerogatives in relation to society. As Y.P. Mei describes, `Do not ask what society can do for you, ask what you can do for society.'[107] In Confucianism, the social obligations and responsibilities of an individual are not chains and burdens to be escaped from, or to be borne and suffered. On the contrary, it is in the fulfilment of these social responsibilities that an individual realizes his complete personal fulfilment. In order to fulfil his social responsibilities, according to Confucianism, the individual must always remember the importance of self-inspection (*tzu-hsing*) and make sure his behaviour is always in accordance with high principles, rather than with self-interest.

Historically, there were some challenges to this Confucian position from time to time. Li Chih (1527-1602), a radical critic of Confucianism, had suggested that the individual's pursuit of self-interest (*ssu*) was in accordance with human nature and was the ultimate source of public interest *(kung)*.[108] Kung Tzu-chen (1792-1841) also sought to liberate the self by asserting that `public interest (*kung*) and private interest

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[107]Mei, Y. P., `The Status of the Individual in Chinese Social Thought and Practice', in Charles Alexander Moore ed., *The Chinese Mind*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1967, p. 327.

[108]Hsiao Kung-chuan, *Chung-kuo cheng-chi ssu-hsiang shih* (A history of Chinese political thought), vol. 2, Taipei: Lien-ching, 1982, p. 608.

(*ssu*) mutually sustain each other.'[109] Nevertheless, this dissenting voice on the whole remained very feeble until the end of the nineteenth century when, under the influence of Western ideas, more intellectuals began to put stress on individual's interest. Yen Fu was one of the earliest and the most vocal scholars in challenging the essence of Confucian moral doctrine and sanctioning the individual's pursuit of self-interest.

Yen Fu's arguments for individual self-interest were based on two grounds. First, like Bentham, Yen held that the nature of man is to love himself more than others or his community. He tended to repeat one paragraph from Huxley's *Evolution and Ethics*:

> With their enormous differences in natural endowment, men agree in one thing, and that is their innate desire to enjoy the pleasures and to escape the pains of life; and in short, to do nothing but that which it pleases them to do, without the least reference to the welfare of the society into which they are born.[110]

Yen Fu argued that a sound morality should only follow from this perspective. Individual self-interest is the essential element of an individual's happiness and should be regarded as his right. This right of self-interest cannot be sacrificed to fulfil certain abstract obligations.

> So-called obligations are contrasted with rights. Man should have his own rights. Because he enjoys his rights, he therefore has social obligations to fulfil. Obligations imposed on an individual without

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[109]Quoted from Frederic Wakeman, Jr., *History and Will*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973, p. 113.

[110]Huxley, *Evolution and Ethics*, p. 31; for Yen Fu's translation, see, CYFW, vol. 5, p. 1345; for his similar remark, also, pp. 1349, 1355.

accompanying rights, are not obligations at all. That is slavery.[111]

Yen Fu was particularly against obligations imposed on individuals by government in the name of the interests of the society or state. He stated clearly that government has no right to force an individual to sacrifice his own interests for society. On this point, it is interesting to note Yen Fu's comment on Spencer's theory of social organism and Rousseau's theory of the general will. By adopting Spencer's theory of social organism which differs from many other theories of social organism, as we have shown above, he argued that an individual's interest must be regarded as the ultimate end of the collective interest. After comparing the similarities between society and a biological organism, Yen Fu indicated one important difference:

> In the biological organism, only the organism itself has consciousness. Numerous cells or units are composed of one conscious organism. In the social organism, by contrast, the unit itself has consciousness. Every man has the feeling of happiness or pain, has sense perception, and has his nervous system as controlling organ....State or society as an organism has no consciousness itself. Its consciousness can be only an assemblage of the consciousness of the component individuals. The so-called interests of state or society are nothing but the interests of the people. For a biological organism, it is necessary, sometimes, to cut off its limbs and give up some organs in order to preserve the organism. In so doing, the pain of limbs and organs will be less important.... Human society, however, does not have this particular physical body....The so-called state is only an abstract thing, not an actual body worthy of the sacrifice of the constituent people. Examining all historical facts from antiquity to the present, [advocacy of individual sacrifice for the state] can only result in the destruction of the rights and happiness of thousands of people just to preserve one

[111]Yen Fu, *Fa-yi* (A translation of Montesquieu's *The Spirit of the Laws*), vol. 2, Bk XXII, p. 29.

> family's [the emperor's] rights and happiness. This family then uses people's taxes and rents to enjoy a luxurious and privileged life. Such a doctrine is not worth preserving.[112]

Yen Fu spelled out clearly that the idea of an individual sacrificing his own interest for state or society was outdated. According to his account, ancient Greek philosophy, Roman Law, as well as traditional Chinese philosophy held that the state is more important than an individual, and that an individual should serve the state and live for the sake of the state.[113] The modern Western theory which Yen Fu admired held an entirely different view:

> Society is established to serve individuals' interests. The individual does not exist for the sake of society. If individuals cannot have their interests fulfilled in society, society has no reason to exist.[114]

Yen Fu criticized Rousseau's idea of the general will because, he believed, this idea encouraged an individual's sacrifice of his self-interest for the sake of the community. `The most extreme view of emphasizing the public interest', he remarked, `is found in Rousseau's theory of the social contract'. According to Yen Fu, Rousseau regarded the state as the representative of the collective interests of individuals, and therefore, considered it an individual's duty to sacrifice his interest for the sake of the state. He denounced this idea strongly. For him, it could not be justified that an individual should serve the community at the expense of his own interest, except if the individual himself decided to do so voluntarily. He wrote:

> It is against human nature and reason that the ruler of a country asks an individual to sacrifice his property or life to serve the security of the

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[112]CYFW., vol. 2, pp. 314-5.

[113]CYFW., vol. 2, p. 315.

[114]Ibid.

> nation. Whenever this idea is adopted, the ruler will pretend to secure the people's interests in pursuing his interest, and the ordinary people will have no way of protecting themselves.[115]

He further argued for the individual's self-interest by pointing out that an individual pursuing his interest will advance the interests of the whole. This is directly drawn from Adam Smith's argument. From Smith, Yen Fu learned that social benefit and economic order are the result of the self-interested actions of individuals rather than the consequence of some formal plan. Yen Fu had certainly read Smith's famous remark on the `invisible hand' when he translated *The Wealth of Nations*:

> As every individual, therefore, endeavours as much as he can both to employ his capital in the support of domestik industry, and so to direct that industry that its produce may be of the greatest value; every individual necessarily labours to render the annual revenue of the society as great as he can. He generally, indeed, neither intends to promote the publick interest, nor knows how much he is promoting it. By preferring the support of domestick to that of foreign industry, he intends only his own security; and by directing that industry in such a manner as its produce may be of the greatest value, he intends only his own gain, and he is in this, as in many other cases, led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention. ... By pursuing his own interest he frequently promotes that of society more effectually than when he really intends to promote it.[116]

This argument appealed to Yen Fu. He praised Smith repeatedly for his idea of the invisible hand:[117]

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[115]Yen Fu, *Fa-yi* (A translation of Montesquieu's *The Spirit of the Laws*), vol. 2, Bk XXVI, p. 22.

[116]Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, IV.ii.9, vol. 1, p. 456.

[117]Yen Fu's praise of Smith's invisible hand theory can be seen in CYFW, vol. 5, pp. 1347, 1359, 1395; *Yuan-fu* (A Translation of Adam Smith's *The Wealth of*

> The wealth and strength of Europe in recent times are regarded as the result of economics. The principal figure in economics is Adam Smith. Smith's greatest principle is that the greatest interest lies in people's mutual interest. It is not in an individual's self-interest to harm others. It is also not right to benefit others by harming oneself. Neither is it right to benefit an individual by harming society.[118]

Yen Fu was convinced that an individual's pursuit of his self-interest was essential for the development of a society. Like Smith, he also believed in the natural harmony of the individual's interest with the social interest. `The purpose of wealth and strength is no more than benefiting people. However, to benefit people, it must begin with people's pursuing their own interests.'[119]

VI

It should be said, however, that Yen Fu had many misgivings about utilitarianism. First, Yen Fu's embrace of utilitarianism was mainly in the area of collective action. He hardly ever treated utilitarianism as a philosophy of personal morality. Even in his justification of individual self-interest on utilitarian grounds, his main aim was not to formulate a principle of personal morality, but to formulate a socio-political policy in the area relating to individual interests. Like Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, his contemporary, he seemed to distinguish private morality from public

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Nations), vol. 2, pp. 481, 536.

[118]CYFW, vol.5, p. 1349.

[119]CYFW, vol. 1, p. 14.

morality.[120] From the viewpoint of socio-political policy, the individual should be encouraged to pursue his own self-interest. However, for the individual with moral decency, he should not pursue his interests only. He has to follow certain moral rules. The essence of those moral rules was still the Confucian principle of righteousness.

This feature of Yen Fu's thought can be clearly seen in his discussion of enlightened self-interest. When Yen Fu justified individual self-interest, he emphasized that it should be what he called `enlightened self-interest'. He acknowledged that this idea was derived from Smith:

> Smith always mentions that, while the world is full of shallow men and ignorant men, there are no genuine `small men' *(hsiao jen)*. The `small man' presumably sees only his own interest. However, if we assume that he discerns his long-term, real interests, how does he differ in his behaviour from that of the virtuous man? For instance, if someone's moral sense is so weak that he ... steals gold in the morning and is caught in the evening, he will lose his self-interest. If this is called man's self-interest, then what is harming oneself? The principles of evolution do not regard the self-interest of the short-sighted and ignorant as true self-interest and do not treat narrowly abnegating self-righteousness or extravagant and excessive `righteousness' as true righteousness.[121]

To be sure, the notion `enlightened self-interest' here is similar to the same notion in Western utilitarianism. Western utilitarians generally did not favour blind selfishness, and encouraged enlightened self-interest. Yet, there is a subtle difference between Yen Fu's enlightened self-interest and the Western utilitarianism. For the latter, `enlightened' means that the individual, enlightened by reason, understands his

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[120]On Liang's distinction of public morality and private morality, see Chang Hao, *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and Intellectual Transition in China, 1890-1907*, pp. 149-54.

[121]Yen Fu, *Yuan-fu* (A Translation of Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*), vol. 1, pp. 76-7.

long-term interests. When Yen Fu talked about `enlightened self-interest', however, he meant more than an individual's long term interests. He stated that an individual's self-interest, by following a correct principle, was enlightened self-interest.[122] By correct principle, he had `righteousness' in mind. He continued to regard `righteousness' as the relevant criteria in the judgement of individual behaviour.

Yen Fu did not see any conflict between an individual's long-term self-interest and the requirement of the principle of righteousness. On the contrary, he emphasized that an individual could achieve his self-interest only by following righteousness. He claimed that `it is as clear as a burning flame that without righteousness there can be no utility and without following the way (*tao*) no profit.'[123] He wrote:

> Almost all the ancient doctrines, both in the West and the East, regard profit and reason (*tao-i*) as incompatible.... As people are enlightened, they know that they can not achieve profit without understanding reason and they can not fulfil self-interest without following righteousness. There is nothing wrong with profit. The essential issue is by what principle to achieve it.[124]

Yen Fu's connection of enlightened self-interest with righteousness led him to put greater stress on human moral perfection than Western utilitarians did. He regarded individual moral improvement as one of the most important conditions for a good society. He complained bitterly that Confucian education did not pay sufficient attention to the mass of the population.[125] By distinguishing gentlemen *(chun-tzu)* from small men (*hsiao-jen)*, he claimed, Confucianism in fact brought two different moralities to society. The gentlemen often claimed to follow righteousness regardless

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[122]CYFW, vol. 5, p. 1395.

[123]Yen Fu, *Yuan-fu* (A Translation of Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*), vol. 1, pp. 76-7.

[124]CYFW, vol.5, p. 1395.

[125]CYFW, vol. 4, p. 1233.

of practical consequences. The masses, in contrast, had no hope of becoming gentlemen and had little moral sense other than pursuing blind self-interest. They `only understand benefiting themselves by harming others and do not understand that it is in the greatest interest to achieve mutual benefits by harming nobody'.[126] He hoped to educate the people to pursue a kind of self-interest which benefitted both the individual and society as a whole.

Even in the sphere of social and political policies, Yen Fu was not completely satisfied with utilitarianism. While he appreciated the rational and critical features of utilitarianism, he was nevertheless afraid that applying the principle of utility to every aspect of collective action might lead to disastrous consequences for human society. He expressed two major concerns regarding utilitarianism as a moral philosophy for collective action.

First, he was concerned that the unrestrained pursuit of the interest of one collectivity might harm the interest of another collectivity. With respect to national policies, utilitarianism primarily meant for him to judge policies in terms of enhancing or reducing the wealth and strength of the nation. The wealth and strength of a nation, however, could be used wrongly to harm other nations. As we have shown before, Yen Fu was highly critical of any policy of pursuing the national interest by harming others. He saw the unchecked pursuit of the national interest regardless of principles of justice and righteousness as the evil cause of the First World War.[127] While Yen Fu was reluctant to criticize responsibility of Darwinism for the aggressive policies of Germany in the war, he was nevertheless outspoken in criticizing utilitarian principles as responsible for Germany's behaviour. He characterized the policy of Germany as `pursuing its own interests only and disregarding the principle of justice'.[128] `If they see some benefits, they will pursue them regardless of righteousness.'[129] In his later years, Yen criticized Western

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[126]CYFW, vol.1, pp. 30-1.

[127]CYFW, vol. 3, p. 623.

[128]Ibid., vol. 1, p. 56.

[129]Ibid.

civilization on the whole as being only concerned with `utility' and thereby having brought great harm to humanity.[130] He then reasserted the Confucian position that one should have a universal mind rather than a selfish mind.[131]

Secondly, Yen Fu was concerned with the issue of the `faith' of the people. Ironically, the concern that the people's faith might be undermined by introducing Western ideas and systems was one of the most important reasons for the reluctance of traditional conservatives in the late nineteenth century to undertake reforms. Conservatives usually argued that it was the people's faith, rather than advanced technology, which made a nation strong and prosperous. When Yen Fu introduced utilitarianism, his main target was this kind of thinking. By asserting utilitarian principles, he subjected all traditional ideas and institutions to the principle of utility. Yet, Yen Fu never completely rejected the notion that the existence of a shared faith among the people was a necessary condition for the very existence of a nation. Particularly in his later years, Yen Fu raised again and again the issue of the people's faith. He argued that a society could not exist without a shared value system.[132] Like a nucleus for an atom, shared values for a nation are a `condensation point'. A system of shared values was called by him `the spirit of a nation'.[133] The `spirit of a nation', he wrote, `is the foundation of the existence and development of a nation. Different nations have different national spirits due to different cultural traditions (*ch'iao-hua*). These cultural traditions have developed for several thousand years before they reached maturity. If a nation is able to preserve her national spirit, she will not perish even if she is subject to the control of other nations.'[134] In comparison, if a nation cannot preserve her national spirit, she is bound to perish. Yen Fu quoted a famous phrase from Chuang Tzu to express his belief: `Nothing is more sad than the death of

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[130]Ibid., vol. 3, p. 623.

[131]See my last chapter.

[132]CYFW, vol. 2, p. 342.

[133]Ibid.

[134]Ibid., p. 330.

spirit....This is true for an individual, it is even truer for a nation.'[135]

James Pusey once noted that Yen Fu's thought was full of contradictions.[136] Yen's discussions of the principle of righteousness and the principle of utility, more than anywhere else, testify to Pusey's point. The contradictions in Yen's ideas of righteousness and utility illustrated, firstly, the limitations of Yen's capacity for tackling profound metaphysical and philosophical issues. His discussions of the issues of righteousness and utility were practical in orientation. They lacked philosophical profoundness and logical coherence. He was more successful in raising questions than answering them. He was clearer about what he opposed than about what he proposed. He could see the weakness of Confucian moral philosophy. He understood the need to adopt some kind of consequentialist principle. In the meantime, he was aware that there must be some forms of moral rules besides calculation of profit of every act. However, he was unable to formulate a systematic answer for this issue.

Secondly, Yen's contradictions illustrated the difficulty modern Chinese intellectuals confronted in introducing modern Western instrumental rationalism into Chinese thought. Although Yen Fu was one of the most Westernized intellectuals of his generation, and although he was more rationalistic in social and political thought than most of his contemporaries, he could not escape from the influence of Confucian morality. If we compare Yen's acceptance of Darwinism with his acceptance of utilitarianism, the deep-rooted moralistic outlook in Yen Fu's thought can be clearly seen. On the whole, Yen was much more consistent in his embrace of Darwinism than in his embrace of utilitarianism. Darwinism aroused Yen's sympathy because its moralistic and universalistic tendency appealed to Yen Fu's heart. By contrast, one can always detect a sense of reluctance in Yen Fu's acceptance of utilitarianism. He never felt at home in embracing utilitarianism. This was why he always tended to modify the principle of utility by other principles of morality.

This feature of Yen Fu's thought, to a great degree, illustrates one of the predicaments which has been confronting intellectuals in China since the late nineteenth century: how to introduce modern Western instrumental rationalism and,

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[135]Ibid.

[136]James Pusey, *China and Charles Darwin*, p. 56.

in the meantime, pursue the moral and spiritual goals of both the individual and the society. This predicament has been most acutely expressed by Wang Kuo-wei (1877-1927), a philosopher and writer. Caught between idealism and pragmatism, Wang ruefully remarked that what he really loved was no longer believable; what he believed to be true was utterly unlovable:

> In general those philosophical theories that can be loved cannot be believed, and those that can be believed cannot be loved. I seek truth yet I love mistaken forms of it. Great metaphysics, rigorist ethics, and pure aesthetics - of these we are inordinately fond. However, in searching for what is believable, we turn instead to the positive theory of truth, the hedonistic theory of ethics, and empiricist theory of aesthetics. I know the latter are believable but I cannot love them, and I know the former are lovable but I cannot believe them.[137]

To be sure, Yen Fu was much more pragmatic than Wang Kuo-wei. Yet he might share Wang's remark that utilitarianism is `believable', but far from `lovable'.

[137]See Joey Bonner, *Wang Kuo-wei: an Intellectual Biography*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986, p. 95.

Part Two

Towards a Liberal and Democratic Society

In the last three chapters, I have shown that Yen Fu introduced Western evolutionary theory and utilitarian ideas into China to promote change in China's social and political systems. Yen's purpose was to encourage China to follow the lead of the West and build a prosperous, strong and better organized country.

While Yen Fu's arguments for change were novel in the mid-1890s when he began to publish his essays and translations, the idea of change was commonplace by the turn of the century. Traditional conservatism declined dramatically during the years following the Sino-Japanese war. The idea of effecting change by following Western examples became accepted across nearly the entire spectrum of social strata in China. `Even the most conservative elements in Chinese society, including those at court and in the bureaucracy were abandoning ... conservatism and turning increasingly toward reform'.[1]

As traditional conservative opposition to change waned, the advocates of change began to split over the issues of the direction and the pace of China's social and political development. Radicalism emerged in the early 1900s as the main advocate of change.[2] The radicalism I refer here to was not a unified ideology, but a disposition shared by various advocates of change. This disposition contained at least two interrelated elements: 1) a belief `that the problems of the old order cannot be solved, its evils not cured, within the framework of that order', and `that a fundamentally new order is required'; 2) a willingness to use extreme political means to bring this new order about.[3]

Radicalism appeared in various forms in the first two decades of this century. It first appeared in the ideology of nationalist revolutionaries who led the Revolution

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[1]Michael Gasster, *Chinese Intellectuals and the Revolution of 1911: the Birth of Modern Chinese Radicalism*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1969, p. viii.

[2]On Chinese radicalism in the early decades of this century, see Michael Gasster, *Chinese Intellectuals and the Revolution of 1911*; Mary Backus Rankin, *Early Chinese Revolutionaries: Radical Intellectuals in Shanghai and Chekiang, 1902-1911*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971.

[3]I adopted this definition of radicalism from Michael Freeman, *Edmund Burke and the Critique of Political Radicalism*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980, p. 3.

of 1911. It then developed into the intensified, Western-oriented intellectual ferment of the New Culture Movement, which began in 1915, and into the anti-imperialism of the May Fourth Movement of 1919. Left-wing movements, such as the Anarchist movement and the early Communist movement, were later manifestations in the 1920s.[4]

The form of radicalism Yen Fu confronted was mainly the one presented by the nationalist revolutionaries of the first two decades of the twentieth century. The nationalist revolutionary movement emerged in the early 1900s in terms of organization and ideology.[5] Several factors contributed to the surge of the revolutionary movement. On the one hand, the failure of the 1898 reform and the humiliation of having Western troops occupy Peking during the Boxer uprising stirred strong feelings of frustration and anger, especially among young intellectuals, towards the Ch'ing government. The government was viewed by many as incompetent and unwilling to undertake fundamental reforms to save China from foreign inroads. This frustration and anger quickly turned to radical sentiments. On the other hand, the development of modern schools and a flood of Chinese students studying abroad, particularly in Japan, brought up a new class of intelligentsia who were more and more radicalized through their access to Western ideas and institutions.[6] From 1901, Chinese students in Japan started to organize various societies and publish journals to propagate ideas in favour of the anti-Manchu revolution. This revolutionary enthusiasm quickly spread to mainland China. By 1905, more than one hundred revolutionary publications appeared in Shanghai alone.[7]

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[4]Mary Backus Rankin, *Early Chinese Revolutionaries: Radical Intellectuals in Shanghai and Chekiang, 1902-1911*, p. 6.

[5]Michael Gasster, *Chinese Intellectuals and the Revolution of 1911*, p. 28.

[6]Chinese students were sent to Japan as early as in 1896. The number of the students reached its highest in 1905 and 1906 with estimate between 8,000 to 20,000. See Marius Jansen, `Japan and the Chinese Revolution of 1911', in *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 11, pp. 348-53.

[7]Michael Gasster, *Chinese Intellectuals and the Revolution of 1911*, p. 42; also see, Mary Backus Rankin, *Early Chinese Revolutionaries: Radical Intellectuals in Shanghai and Chekiang, 1902-1911*, pp. 48-72.

In August 1905, under Sun Yat-sen's leadership, various revolutionary organizations were united to form `the Revolutionary Alliance' (*Tung-meng-hui*) in Tokyo, which was `China's first modern political party'.[8]

Also during the early 1900s, revolutionary ideology began to take shape. This ideology was not systematic and coherent in any sense.[9] Revolutionaries were more certain about what they wanted to destroy than what they wanted to create. The basic goals of the revolution were summed up by Sun Yat-sen as `the Three People's Principles', namely `*min-tsu chu-i*' (people's national consciousness, or nationalism), `*min-ch'uan chu-i*' (people's rights, or democracy) and `*min-sheng chu-i*' (people's livelihood, or socialism). The realization of these three goals, as Sun spelled them out, required a revolution with three dimensions: a national revolution to overthrow the rule of the Manchu minority, a political revolution to remove the monopoly of power by the monarch and to establish a republic, and a social revolution aimed to abolish the monopoly of wealth by the rich.[10] The French and American revolutions provided the revolutionaries with the most valuable precedents. A more recent model was found in Russian nihilism, anarchism, and extreme populism.[11]

Yen Fu adopted what can be called `a middle course' between the traditional conservative and the new radical positions. On the one hand, he challenged traditional political ideas and institutions. On the other hand, he was increasingly alarmed by the growing influence of radical ideas, and began to confront radicalism at the beginning of the century. In this struggle on two fronts, Yen outlined his vision of political change in China based largely on the British model. The core of this vision was to achieve a liberal, and, to some extent, democratic political system through piecemeal reform.

Yen Fu's political ideas have not yet received proper treatment by scholars

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[8]Mary Clabaugh Wright, `Introduction: the Rising Tide of Change', in *China in Revolution: the First Phase, 1900-1913*, ed, Mary Clabaugh Wright, p. 46.

[9]Ibid., pp. 47-8.

[10]Michael Gasster, *Chinese Intellectuals and the Revolution of 1911*, p. 107.

[11]Don C. Price, *Russia and the Roots of the Chinese Revolution, 1896-1911*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1974, pp. 193-212.

either in China or in the West. Chinese scholars have often confused Yen Fu's criticism of radicalism with traditional conservatism, thus equating Yen's opposition to radicalism to his opposition to liberal and democratic reforms.[12] Western scholars, notably Schwartz, put undue weight on the influence of social Darwinism on Yen Fu and overemphasized the nationalistic concern of Yen's liberalism. They thus failed to understand Yen's serious effort to transplant Western liberal and democratic systems to the Chinese soil, while also failing to discern any significant differences between Yen Fu and various forms of radicalism.

To address these shortcomings in the study of Yen Fu, the following three chapters provide a comprehensive account of Yen Fu's political ideas. They examine Yen Fu's ideas of liberty, law and democracy with a focus on Yen's theoretical reflections on traditional Chinese political ideas and institutions as well as his contemplation of modern Western liberal and democratic ideas. They also examine how Yen's ideas of political reform fared in a rapidly changing era.

[12]Most notably, Wang Shih, *Yen Fu Chuang* (Biography of Yen Fu); Chou Cheng-fu, *Yen Fu ssu-hsiang shu-p'ing* (A critical interpretation of Yen Fu's thought).

Chapter V
Liberty, Virtue and Law

I

In his first published essay of 1895 entitled `On the Speed of World Change', Yen Fu claimed that the fundamental difference between traditional Chinese culture and Western culture lay in their different positions on the issue of freedom:

> The idea of freedom has been deeply feared by our sages and therefore has never been adopted as a doctrine. Western people, by contrast, believe that man has some endowed rights, particularly the right of freedom. Every man is supposed to have freedom, and every nation too. They try hard to prevent these freedoms from being violated. Violation of a man's freedom is regarded as breaching the principles of heaven (*t'ien-li*) and the way of man (*jen-tao*). ... Therefore, it is prohibited, even for a monarch, to violate a man's freedom. Their laws and punishment are aimed mainly at protecting the freedom of the people.[1]

Many other differences between China and the modern West, Yen Fu suggested, could be understood from the perspective of their different attitudes towards freedom:

> From the difference over the issue of freedom, there arises a whole host of other differences. To mention but a few:...while China highly values conformity, the West highly values diversity; while China has many taboos, the West encourages people to express their opinions and dissatisfactions; while China esteems a simple existence, the West favours the enjoyment of life; while China prizes moderation and

[1]CYFW, vol. 1, p. 3.

self-restraint, the West honours self-assertion.[2]

A month later, in another essay, 'The Root of Strength', Yen Fu again highlighted the importance of respect for individual freedom in modern Western social, economic, and political systems. He used the old Chinese 'foundation-functional' (*t'i-yung*) dichotomy to suggest that the modern Western political system was built on two important principles: freedom and democracy, of which freedom was the foundation and democracy the functional.[3]

Yen Fu was probably the first person in modern China who regarded respect for individual liberty as the cornerstone of modern Western culture and institutions. Before him, there had been numerous intellectuals who advocated learning from the West on various grounds. Of the most discussed and admired aspects of the West were its democratic ideas and institutions. As we will show later, modern Chinese intellectuals generally were more receptive to Western democratic ideas than to liberal values. Most intellectuals in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries envisioned a society with some democratic institutions. Yet few regarded individual liberty as an indispensable element of an ideal society. This phenomenon was probably related to the neglect of the interest of the individual within the Confucian tradition. As we have noted earlier, Confucianism generally emphasized *kung* (public) over *ssu* (private). Under the influence of this tradition, modern Chinese intellectuals generally demonstrated great sensitivity to Western democracy and perceived it to be a mechanism for achieving wider involvement in public affairs. By contrast, they identified individual freedom with *ssu*, which had associations with selfishness. Because he had lived in Britain and knew something of Western liberalism, Yen Fu discerned the prominence of individual freedom in modern Western society and thus emphasized the importance of liberty for an ideal society more than his intellectual predecessors and contemporaries.

Nevertheless, Yen Fu's conception of liberty as presented in his essays in 1895 was quite rudimentary. He did not spell out clearly what he meant by 'freedom', nor

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[2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid., p. 23.

did he discuss how to transplant Western liberal ideals into China's soil. It was not until his translation of Mill's *On Liberty* that his idea of liberty began to take shape. As we have shown earlier, Yen Fu started to translate Mill's work in 1899 and finished the initial draft in 1900. The manuscript was initially lost during the Boxer Rebellion when Yen Fu was forced to flee Tientsin to Shanghai, and was later found by a Western friend. Yen published the translation in 1903 with a few minor changes, including the change of title from *On Liberty* to *Ch'un-chi ch'uan-chieh lun* (On the boundaries of the rights of society and of the individual).[4]

The significance of Yen Fu's translation of Mill's work as well as his change of title has been the subject of controversy. Yen Fu's biographer Chou Chen-fu interpreted Yen's change of title to represent Yen's retreat from his early idea of liberty.[5] Lin Tzai-Chueh went even further by suggesting that Yen Fu's link between liberty and control indicated that he was committed to a `social Darwinian collectivism'.[6] Schwartz, by contrast, emphasized the persistent nationalistic nature of Yen Fu's notion of freedom which was supposedly derived from Spencer's social Darwinism. Schwartz thus dismissed any important influence which Mill might have had on Yen Fu's idea of liberty.[7]

I would tend here to agree with the assertion by Chou and Lin that Yen Fu's translation of Mill's work, including his change of title, represented a significant change in his position on the issue of freedom. Yet I would argue that this change did not represent a retreat from the idea of liberty, but rather signified the maturity of Yen's thought about liberty. With the translation of Mill's work, Yen began to

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[4]Yen Fu, *Ch'un-chi ch'uan-chieh lun* (On the boundaries of the rights of society and of the individual, A translation of John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty*), p. viii.

[5]Chou Chen-fu, *Yen Fu ssu-hsiang shu-p'ing* (A critical interpretation of Yen Fu's thought), p. 199.

[6]Lin Tzai-chueh, `Yen Fu ti tzu-yu kuan' (Yen Fu's understanding of freedom', in *The Bulletin of Tung-hai University*, Taipei, 1983, p. 100.

[7]Schwartz believed that Yen Fu's change of the title of his translation of *On Liberty* was `nothing more than an abbreviation of his translation of chapter iv of the original, "of the limits of the authority of society over the individual"'. (Schwartz, *In Search of Wealth and Power*, p. 144).

apprehend some fundamental principles of modern Western liberalism. Mill's *On Liberty* taught him that individual freedom was valuable both for the wellbeing of the individual and for society. More importantly, it equipped him with weapons to combat two extreme views about liberty: traditional conservatism and radicalism. Yen Fu regarded both as harmful to China's progress.

> In the last ten years, more and more people in China are applying themselves to studying Western politics. In consequence, the doctrine of freedom can often be heard among scholar-officials. The conservatives were frightened by the doctrine and regard it as the great scourge. The lovers of the new doctrine, on the other hand, cannot understand the meaning of liberty at all and think of it in terms of unbridled license and recklessness. With the view that both of these two extremes are wrong, I am publishing my earlier translation of Mill's book, with a change of title from *On Liberty* to *On the Boundaries of the Rights of Society and of the Individual.* There are many theories on liberty not all of which are included in Mill's book. Nevertheless, only if we understand the boundaries of the rights of society and of the individual, can the doctrine of liberty be applied.[8]

In addition to Mill's work, Yen Fu also drew extensively from Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* and Montesquieu's *The Spirit of the Laws*, both of which he translated into Chinese in the 1900s. Smith's theories of private economy and a free market formed the basis of Yen's economic liberalism. The main influence of Montesquieu's theory on Yen Fu's idea of liberty was the former's idea of linking freedom with the law.

[8]CYFW, vol. 1, pp. 131-2.

II

Yen Fu's idea of liberty followed from his definition of `liberty'. Because the notion of `liberty' was alien to traditional Chinese political thought, great confusion over its meaning characterized Chinese intellectual thinking at the turn of the century. There was both great excitement about the idea of liberty in the Chinese intellectual world and little understanding of it. As Yen Fu observed, `all of those things which brought about people's happiness have been called liberty, even those which are entirely unrelated to liberty.'[9]

Yen Fu believed that the ambiguous usage of `liberty' would not only hinder a scientific examination of the issue of liberty, but, more importantly, would mislead others to go in the wrong direction in the name of liberty. Therefore he felt necessary to clarify the concept. `The first step of any scientific discussions is to clarify the concept (*cheng-ming*)'.[10] Using a Confucian phrase, Yen also wrote that `if concept (*ming*) is not clarified (*cheng*), people will not know where to put hand and foot.'[11]

In his `political lectures' of 1906, Yen Fu spent two lectures almost exclusively on clarifying the concept of liberty. He complained that ideas which were not related to freedom had been discussed under the name of freedom. For instance, freedom had been used to refer to a situation in which a country was free from domination by other countries.[12] The fight for a country's independence was incorrectly deemed a fight for freedom, Yen Fu suggested. To defend one's country should be properly called defending national independence rather than defending freedom.[13] National independence might mean freedom for individuals, but it could

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[9]Yen Fu, `Political Lectures' (1906), CYFW, vol. 5, p. 1280.

[10]CYFW, p. 1247.

[11]Ibid., p. 1282, for Confucius' remark, see *The Analects*, 13:3, trans. D.C. Lau, p. 118.

[12]CYFW, vol. 5, p. 1289.

[13]Ibid., p. 1281.

mean tyranny for them too.[14] Secondly, freedom had been used to refer to a situation in which the government had to be accountable to its people.[15] This meaning, Yen Fu suggested, should be properly termed democracy. Thirdly, some claimed that freedom meant *kung-tao* (Justice or fairness), but Yen considered this meaning confusing.[16]

Yen Fu held that the idea of freedom was exclusively about the individual - individual action according to his will. He used an old Chinese term *tzu-yu* to translate `liberty' or `freedom'.[17] He explained the meaning he hoped to convey by this term:

> `Liberty' (*tzu-yu*) originates from the old word *libertas* which was the name of a deity. The word `liberty' is often interchangeable with the word `freedom'. It literally means to be without restriction and is the antonym of `slavery', `subjection', `bondage' and `necessity'.[18]

To be sure, various forms of restraint confronted the individual's actions. The absence of any form of restraint thus might be referred to as freedom. Yen illustrated assorted meanings of freedom in the West by drawing examples from several British writers' conceptions:

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[14]Ibid., pp. 1281-2.

[15]Ibid., p. 1289.

[16]CYFW, vol. 1, p. 132.

[17]The term *tzu-yu* literally means `to follow one's own inclination'. (de Bary, *The Liberal Tradition in China*, Hongkong: The Chinese University Press, 1983, p. 43.) Grieder renders it to mean `free-and-easy-do-what-you-will-ism'. (Jerome B. Grieder, *Intellectuals and the State in Modern China*, p. 241.) The origin of the term *tzu-yu* can be traced to Cheng Huan's (127-200 B.C.) notes to *The Book of Rites*, where he first used *tzu* (self) and *yu* (act) together in his phrase `one is afraid of advancing and retreating freely (*tzu-yu*)', see *Ch'i-yuan* (Dictionary of the origins of words, new edition, Peking: Commercial Press, 1979, vol.3, p. 2583.)

[18]CYFW, vol. 1, p. 132; the terms `liberty', `freedom', `slavery', `subjection', `necessity' and `justice' were originally in English.

> When the French Revolution broke out,... a famous English writer, Coleridge, composed a poem to praise it. He claimed that real freedom is just like white clouds floating in the sky freely at will. He felt that the French Revolution had removed restrictions from people and enabled them to act freely like white clouds.... Another famous English writer, J. Ruskin, however, repudiated Coleridge's view. He pointed out that white clouds seem to float freely, but they in fact follow the laws of gravity and the laws of optics and thermodynamics. They are controlled strictly by those laws, and have no freedom at all. ... Another English writer, Shelley, wrote in 1820 about the condition of the English working people. He suggested that in a free country there should be no hungry people. He held that the meaning of freedom should include the right of people to enjoy a comfortable life.[19]

It is noteworthy that the examples Yen Fu mentioned here in fact touched on some major controversies concerning the concept of freedom in modern Western philosophy: freedom versus necessity, as well as negative freedom versus positive freedom.

Yen Fu maintained that with regard to freedom, political scientists ought not to concern themselves with whether the individual can have free will against necessity, or about whether he has sufficient resources to fulfil his will. Rather they should address the individual's freedom from restraints of others. He thus defined freedom as a state in which the individual can do whatever he wants to do without restrictions imposed by others.[20] By the restrictions of others, Yen Fu referred mainly to those restraints imposed by the state and society on the individual.

If an individual could act freely without any restraints of others whatsoever, his freedom is called `perfect freedom'.[21] Perfect freedom implies a state of anarchy

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[19]CYFW, vol. 5, p. 1281.

[20]CYFW, vol. 5, pp. 1279, 1299.

[21]Yen Fu, *Ch'un-chi ch'uan-chieh lun* (A translation of John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty*), p. vii.

where no government exists.[22] Yen pointed out that various philosophers both in China and in the West envisioned the ideal state as an anarchical state where people lived harmoniously and freely. However, such a state had never existed before. It would probably not exist in the future unless man's intellectual and moral character was fundamentally changed.[23] Yen Fu remarked that even in the most civilized societies man's moral character did not allow an anarchical society to work. Man was not always able to respect the liberty of others. Thus, `if his liberty is without limitation, he and others will conflict with each other and society will became a battlefield.'[24]

As a student of utilitarianism, Yen Fu held that the purpose of a man's life was to seek happiness both for himself and for others. Freedom did not necessarily lead to the happiness either of the individual or of society.[25] To be sure, man values freedom and enjoys it. Yet, man values other good things too, such as social harmony, security and economic prosperity.[26] Sometimes, freedom would enhance his overall happiness and the general happiness of the society; but sometimes it would harm them.[27] Individual and social wellbeing depended on the balance of freedom and other desirable values. This required the balance of individual freedom with the restraint on this freedom imposed by the state and the society. In this sense, the individual's freedom in society was limited, where perfect freedom was not.[28] He wrote:

> Freedom is to do whatever one wants to do. Control is to subject an individual's behaviour to the demands of social welfare and to restrain

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[22]CYFW, vol. 5, p. 1289.

[23]CYFW, vol. 5, p. 1290.

[24]Ibid.

[25]CYFW, vol. 5, p. 1288.

[26]CYFW, vol. 5, p. 1279.

[27]CYFW, vol. 5, p. 1288.

[28]Ibid.

> the individual freedom for the sake of society. Thus, although freedom is the highest happiness of an individual, it must be restrained with controls in order to achieve the greatest happiness of the greatest number when the individual enters society. By controlling the individual totally without leaving room for his freedom, society cannot develop; by pursuing freedom without restriction, society will have no order. The task of the politician and political scientist is to balance these two aspects and to have them complement rather than conflict with each other.[29]

Thus Yen Fu indicated that the issue of freedom was not whether the individual should be free, but rather about in what sphere he should and should not be free. The central issue of freedom was to draw a line of demarcation between the two spheres: one in which the individual could act freely and the other in which the individual was subject to social and state controls. This was the single most important idea Yen learned from Mill and reveals why Yen changed the title of Mill's work to *On the Boundaries of the Rights of Society and of the Individual.* Yen wrote:

> When a person enters society, all his actions can be divided into two parts: one subject to the will of others, the other subject to his own will. Under various political regimes, the balance of these two parts varies. Some people are more subject to the will of others, while others are more subject to their own wills. The latter are called free people; the former are not free.[30]

This definition of liberty established Yen Fu's position as a liberal pioneer in modern China. Isaiah Berlin once remarked that the essence of modern English political philosophy regarding freedom lies in defining freedom in a negative sense. Following from this definition, `a frontier must be drawn between the area of private

[29]CYFW, vol. 5, p. 1279.

[30]Ibid.

life and that of public authority'.[31] This definition of freedom, as George G. Brenkert indicated, constitutes `the heart and the life blood of liberal freedom'.[32] Yen Fu's definition of freedom as not subject to the restraints of others and particularly his distinction between the rights of the individual and those of government and society as the basis of freedom, touches upon the essence of modern English liberal thought.

III

Yen Fu's definition of freedom was the basis of his ideas of liberty. Based on this definition, he criticized traditional Chinese political systems and ideas on the one hand, while refuting radical ideas of liberty on the other.

Yen Fu primarily criticized China's social and political systems. He maintained that throughout China's history, the Chinese people had little political or social freedom in comparison with the modern West. There were two causes for this lack of freedom. First, there was a lack of distinction between the rights of the individual and those of the government. Secondly, life was dominated by traditional rites (*Li*).

Yen Fu perceived the enormous scope of state power in China to be the main threat to the people's freedom. His view was obviously influenced by some Western liberal thinkers. Many Western liberals of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries believed that one of the fundamental problems of China's political system was the state's enormous power.[33] Montesquieu defined China's political system as despotic, a system in which `man is a creature that blindly submits to the absolute will of the sovereign.'[34] Yen Fu was certainly impressed by the Western liberals' criticism of the

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[31]Isaiah Berlin, `Two Concepts of Liberty' in *Four Essays on Liberty*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970, pp. 123-4.

[32]George G. Brenkert, *Political Freedom*, London: Routledge, 1991, p. 65.

[33]Karl Bünger, `Forward' to *The Scope of State Power in China*, ed. S. R. Schram, London: School of Oriental and African Studies Press, 1985, p. xxi.

[34]Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, trans. Thomas Nugent, New York: Hafner Press, 1949, vol. 1, Bk III:10, p. 27.

excessive state power in China, and he expressed similar views of his own:

> The Western and Chinese systems are very different. People's rights therefore differ greatly. A King in the West only performs the duty of sovereign. China's emperor, by contrast, acts not only as a sovereign, but also as a teacher. Chinese society, therefore, is patriarchal, or paternalistic. In the West the king as sovereign only takes care of military and legal affairs. Other things, like rites, religion, industry, agriculture, husbandry, commerce, education, and literature, are all left to people to do by themselves. China's political rulers, from emperor to local officials, all serve the duties relating to heaven, earth, ruling, rites, and education.[35]

Yen Fu often used the term `patriarchal' or `paternalistic' to describe China's political system. He perceived the emperor in China to act as the father in a family. The emperor had the right, or, perhaps, the duty to take care of every aspect of the people's lives. He functioned both as a `monarch' (*chun*) and as a `teacher' (*shih*): he was responsible for the administration of state affairs as well as for supervising people's thought and behaviour. Either through education, often by setting up models, or through punishment, the emperors told people how to think and how to behave.[36] Under such a system, people could hardly have freedoms or rights. Their consciences and behaviour were all subject to the interference of the rulers:

> Our China's system, even in its most successful times, is far from the way (*tao*) as defined by Western thinkers. Chinese people, at their best, are the sons of a paternalistic government. Under this paternalistic government, how can people have autonomy? ... We cannot help but sigh with emotion when reading Mill's discussion about the boundaries between the rights of the individual and the

[35]CYFW, vol. 4, p. 928.

[36]CYFW, vol. 4, pp. 910-1.

state.[37]

In addition to the enormous state power in traditional China, Yen Fu argued that customs and rites (*li*) in China also hindered people's freedom enormously. Yen Fu might have been shocked when he read Mill's characterization of China as representing the extreme case of `the despotism of custom' in *On Liberty*:

> Custom is there in all things, the formal appeal; justice and right mean conformity to custom; the argument of custom no one, unless some tyrant intoxicated with power, thinks of resisting. And we see the result. Those nations must once have had originality; they did not start out of the ground populous, lettered, and versed in many of the arts of life; they made themselves all this, and were then the greatest and most powerful nations of the world. What are they now? The subjects or dependents of tribes whose forefathers wandered in the forests when theirs had magnificent palaces and gorgeous temples, but over whom custom exercised only a divided rule with liberty and progress. A people, it appears, may be progressive for a certain length of time, and then stop.[38]

Yen Fu did not provide much commentary in his translation of Mill's *On Liberty*. But he did comment briefly in his marginal summary of the paragraph just quoted that `the following paragraph outlines the danger of custom.'[39] Yen also praised similar remarks of Montesquieu on China in his translation of *The Spirit of the Laws*. Yen agreed with Montesquieu's statement that rites in China functioned to

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[37]Yen Fu, *Fa-yi* (A translation of Montesquieu's *The Spirit of the Laws*), Bk IXX, p. 18.

[38]J.S. Mill, *On Liberty*, in *Utilitarianism, on Liberty and Considerations on Representative Government*, ed., H. B. Acton, London: Everyman's Library, 1972, p. 139.

[39]Yen Fu, *Ch'un-chi ch'uan-chieh lun* (A translation of John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty*), p. 26.

combine religion, ceremony and custom, thus having a great negative influence on people's freedom.[40] Yen compared the rites and customs of China with religion in the West in their influence on individual liberty:

> In the West the most difficult area for freedom of speech is religion. This is why Mill's discussions of freedom often take religion as an example. In China, our ethics, rites and sage's teachings are similar to their religion and are even more intolerant of freedom of speech than religion in the West.[41]

Yen Fu held tight state control and suppression by custom and rites on people's freedom as responsible for the overall underdevelopment of the Chinese people's moral and intellectual capacities. After this long history of suppression, people lost the motivation to pursue freedom, self-autonomy, and innovation. `They are bound by tradition, confined by custom, and controlled by the sage's teachings.' `They do not think with their minds and only follow ancient ancestors. They consider it right to follow the ancients and wrong to differ from them.'[42]

Yen Fu believed the people's moral and intellectual development to be the fundamental causes of a strong, prosperous, and well-organized society. By blaming the lack of freedom for underdevelopment of the people's moral and intellectual capacities, Yen Fu linked individual liberty with the rise and decline of a civilization. This linkage of liberty with the development of society bore great similarity to Mill's discussions of freedom. Mill, following Tocqueville, perceived the danger of tyranny of the majority to be `too ready submission' and `servility' which would lead to `Chinese stagnation'.[43] Mill expressed this idea clearly in *On Liberty*:

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[40]Yen Fu, *Fa-yi* (A translation of Montesquieu's *The Spirit of the Laws*), Bk IXX, p. 18.

[41]Yen Fu, *Ch'un-chi ch'uan-chieh lun* (A translation of John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty*), p. viii.

[42]Yen Fu, *Fa-yi* (A translation of Montesquieu's *The Spirit of the Laws*), Bk IXX, p. 2.

[43]John Robson, *The Improvement of Mankind*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul,

> We have a warning example in China - a nation of much talent, and, in some respects, even wisdom, ... They are remarkable, too, in the excellence of their apparatus for impressing, as far as possible, the best wisdom they possess upon every mind in the community, and securing that those who have appropriated most of it shall occupy the posts of honour and power. Surely the people who did this have discovered the secret of human progressiveness, and must have kept themselves steadily at the head of the movement of the world. On the contrary, they have become stationary - have remained so for thousands of years; and if they are ever to be farther improved, it must be by foreigners. They have succeeded beyond all hope in what English philanthropists are so industriously working at - in making a people all alike, all governing their thoughts and conduct by the same maxims and rules; and these are the fruits. The modern *régime* of public opinion is, in an unorganized form, what the Chinese educational and political systems are in an organized; and unless individuality shall be able successfully to assert itself against this yoke, Europe, notwithstanding its antecedents and its professed Christianity, will tend to become another China.[44]

IV

In order to revitalize Chinese civilization and rebuild Chinese society, Yen Fu argued that there must be a fundamental reform of China's social, economic and political system based on the principle of liberty. The key to this reform was to define certain spheres for individual action without restraint from either the state or society.

Yen Fu suggested that Mill's ideas of liberty provided the basic criterion for

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1968, p. 111.

[44]J. S. Mill, *On Liberty*, p. 140.

drawing boundaries between the rights of the individual and those of the state and society. In one of his marginal comments to his translation of Mill's work, Yen praised Mill's famous `one very simple principle' as `presenting the fundamental principle of liberty by clarifying the boundaries between the rights of the individual and those of society'.[45] Mill's original text reads:

> The object of this Essay is to assert one very simple principle, as entitled to govern absolutely the dealings of society with the individual in the way of compulsion and control, whether the means used be physical force in the form of legal penalties, or the moral coercion of public opinion. That principle is, that the sole end for which mankind are warranted, individually or collectively, in interfering with the liberty of action of any of their numbers, is self-protection. That the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others. ... The only part of the conduct of any one, for which he is amenable to society, is that which concerns others. In the part which merely concerns himself, his independence is, of right, absolute. Over himself, over his own body and mind, the individual is sovereign.[46]

In theory, Yen Fu seemed to accept wholeheartedly Mill's principle as a general guideline for dealing with individual freedom in society. In his translation of *On Liberty*, he added a short paragraph:

> An individual's speech and action should not be subject to social

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[45]Yen Fu, *Ch'un-chi ch'uan-chieh lun* (A translation of John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty*), p. 10.

[46]J. S. Mill, *On Liberty*, p. 78. The terms `self-regarding' and `other-regarding' will be used hereafter to refer to actions concerning only the actor and actions concerning others respectively. For discussions on Mill's distinction between these two actions, see J. C. Rees, `A Re-reading of Mill On Liberty', *Political Studies*, vol. viii, No. 2, (1960); C. L. Ten, *Mill On Liberty*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980.

> control unless his action concerns others and society. If his action does not concern others, he has full sovereignty over himself, his will and action. This sovereignty is as absolute as the sovereignty of an independent country.[47]

However, there were some subtle differences between Yen Fu and Mill. For Mill, the state and society were warranted in interfering with the individual's action only if the individual's action *harmed* others `directly and in the first instance'.[48] For Yen Fu, the individual could act freely only in the sphere that strictly concerned himself and nobody else. Even if the individual's action did not harm others or society directly, his actions might be of issue if they somehow concerned others or society. He wrote:

> In the West, one can act freely so long one's action concerns only oneself. In such a case, nobody should interfere. However, when one's action concerns (*she*) society, everyone has the right to question it.[49]

This subtle difference in theory yielded some interesting differences in discussions of concrete areas in which the individual should have freedom. Like Mill, Yen Fu discussed three spheres in which the individual might act freely : 1) `liberty of conscience in the most comprehensive sense'; 2) `liberty of tastes and pursuits'; 3) `freedom to unite, for any purpose not involving harm to others'.[50]

Yen Fu agreed with Mill almost completely on liberty of conscience. Yen had a firm commitment to freedom of thought and speech throughout his lifetime. He maintained that `the fundamental principle of jurisprudence is that law can be

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[47]Yen Fu, *Ch'un-chi ch'uan-chieh lun* (A translation of John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty*), p. 11; for Mill's original text, see, *On Liberty*, p. 78.

[48]J.S. Mill, *On Liberty*, p. 80. Italics are mine.

[49]CYFW, vol. 4, p. 994.

[50]Ibid., pp. 80-81.

imposed only on actions.'[51] Speech and thought were said not to be actions. Thus, speech and thought should be entirely resolved by the individual himself and rulers should not interfere with them. `If a ruler puts control on thought and speech, his rule will degenerate into despotic rule, and the people will no longer have freedom.'[52]

Yen Fu identified two possible barriers to be removed in order to protect people's freedom of thought and speech. The first was the suppression of freedom of thought and speech by political authorities which was historically well-established in China. The second barrier which Yen Fu noted with alarm was the intolerance of increasingly radicalized public opinion. Beginning in the early 1900s, Yen realized that the major threat to the freedom of thought, speech and press came not from the increasingly demoralized Ch'ing government, but from newly-emerged radical movements. He believed that because radicals upheld such popular principles as liberty, democracy, and nationalism they gained greater moral authority than the Ch'ing government. Their intolerance of dissident ideas could be devastating to freedom of thought and speech. Yen Fu once angrily criticized a renowned figure in the reform movement of 1898 who wanted to punish a conservative official for writing against reform. He asked, `You are an ardent advocate of reform. I wonder whether your reform will simply change the present monarchy into a lawless despotism or whether you really want to change it into a freer and happier system?'[53] Yen Fu maintained that the essence of freedom was tolerance, including tolerance of conservative, even reactionary opinion.[54] In a free society, everyone pursued truth freely and loved truth regardless of whether it was expressed by friends or enemies.

> Freedom of speech, properly speaking, is nothing but speaking honestly in pursuit of the truth. On the one hand, one should not be constrained by the ancient sages; on the other hand, one should not

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[51]Ibid., p. 271.

[52]Ibid.

[53]Ibid., p. 272.

[54]CYFW, vol. 1, p. 119.

> bend to authorities. Even if one's enemy speaks the truth, one should not ignore it; even if one's emperor or father speaks wrongly, one should not accept it. This is what freedom means. Aristotle once remarked, `I love my teacher Plato more than others, but I love the truth more than Plato.'[55]

Yen Fu justified freedom of speech by two different arguments. First, he argued that freedom of speech and the press could play a role in checking the abuses of power by the authorities and thereby protect people's interests. In his translation of Mill's chapter `Of the Liberty of Thought and Discussion', Yen Fu changed Mill's opening sentences to express this view. Mill's original text reads: `The time, it is to be hoped, is gone by, when any defence would be necessary of the "liberty of the press" as one of the securities against corrupt or tyrannical government.'[56] Yen Fu's translation reads:

> In Britain, people no longer suffer from corruption of officials and the tyranny of the rulers. Is this not the consequence of the freedom of the press? The people there have been enjoying this freedom for a long time.... The idea of freedom of the press has become an established belief.[57]

Secondly, Yen Fu concurred with Mill in taking freedom of thought to be the only way to reach the truth. Mill's philosophical basis for advocating freedom of thought is the assumption of human fallibility. Given that no one can rightfully claim to know anything for certain, Mill developed his instrumental argument for freedom of thought as a means to the discovery of truth. Following Mill's argument Yen Fu

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[55]Yen Fu, *Ch'un-chi ch'uan-chieh lun* (A translation of John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty*), p. ix.

[56]J.S. Mill, *On Liberty*, p. 83.

[57]Yen Fu, *Ch'un-chi ch'uan-chieh lun* (A translation of John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty*), p. 16.

also maintained that freedom of thought provided the only way to reach truth, and promoted the development of an individual's intellectual ability.

While Yen Fu was firmly committed to freedom of thought, speech, and press, he was unenthusiastic in accepting freedom of association for political purposes. He seemed to regard any political action as a concern not only of the individual, but also of society as a whole. Therefore, such actions should be regulated by the state. A notable example was his criticism of the party system.[58]

One issue which best demonstrated the dilemma of Yen Fu's ideas about freedom was the issue of what Mill called `liberty of taste'. To some extent, Yen Fu was committed to the value of `liberty of taste'. He held that an individual had sovereignty over his will and behaviour so long as his behaviour did not involve others and society. Thus, Yen regarded difference in `life styles' as a purely personal matter best left to the individual to decide. He wrote:

> Where the individual should not act freely is in his actions concerning society. In the sphere of the individual's self-regarding actions (*hsiao-chi chih tzu-yu*) which do not concern others, the individual should act freely regardless of whether his actions are morally right. Law should prohibit those actions which harm others. It should not interfere with the individual's life style which only concerns the individual himself. For instance, some women like to go to the temple to worship; some frivolous youths like long hair, and different people like to wear different clothes. All of these actions involve people's life styles and thus belong in the self-regarding category. The ruler should not treat those actions in the same manner as he treats actions such as gambling or blackmail. He should not punish them.[59]

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[58]CYFW, vol. 2, pp. 298-308. A more detailed discussion of Yen Fu's view on party system will be provided in the next chapter.

[59]Yen Fu, *Fa-yi* (A translation of Montesquieu's *The Spirit of the Laws*), Bk IXX, p. 14-5.

In the preceding, Yen Fu clearly stated that the individual freedom to choose a life style was above interference regardless of whether this life style was morally right. As a scholar with profound knowledge of traditional Chinese thought, Yen Fu certainly knew the Confucian position on individual behaviour. Confucianism endowed all human behaviour with certain moral implications. As Hsieh Yu-Wei observed, for Confucianism man's freedom of choice implied only `the freedom to do good or the freedom to choose what is good'.[60] Probably with this idea in mind, Yen Fu wrote:

> So-called freedom usually means freedom to do good, rather than to do evil. However, in defining the concept of freedom, freedom must imply the freedom to do evil. Only by such a definition can the content of freedom be regarded as complete. Only if an individual chooses good or evil by himself, can his good action be rewarded and evil action be punished. Moreover, it is difficult to decide which is good and which is evil. It is often the case that what others regard as evil, the individual regards as good; when others regard something as good, he regards it as evil. This is why the individual's freedom in self-regarding action must be allowed and any interference must be avoided.[61]

Clearly, Yen Fu departed from Confucianism and came close to certain important principles of modern Western liberalism. In particular, his notion that the choice of values was up to the individual himself was close to what Anthony Arblaster called `the liberal conception of the moral life' - that `values are not woven into the fabric of the universe.... The individual must choose his values for himself,

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[60]Hsieh Yu-wei, `The Status of the Individual in Chinese Ethics', in Charles A. Moore ed., *The Chinese Mind*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii: East-West Centre Press, 1967, p. 310.

[61]Yen Fu, *Ch'un-chi ch'uan-chieh lun* (A translation of John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty*), p. x.

and construct his own morality.'[62]

Yet Yen Fu was far from consistent on this issue. He was torn between upholding individual choice and promoting individual cultivation of excellence. This dilemma could be most clearly seen in his discussions of Chuang Tzu's notion of individual free choice.

As we have indicated above, Yen Fu held that the idea of freedom was largely absent from traditional Chinese thought. He made this remark mainly in referring to traditional Confucian thought. By contrast, he showed great interest in Taoist philosophy and praised Taoism as containing `liberal' and `democratic' ideas.[63] He found some ideas conceptualized by Chuang Tzu to be comparable to modern Western liberal ideas. He suggested that Chuang Tzu believed that `there is no objective standard for good or evil', and good or evil are only expressions of the individual's preferences.[64] He praised the philosopher's belief that everything has its own proper nature and can be happy if allowed to exist in accordance with that nature.[65] He compared this idea to the ideas of individuality and individual free choice as found in Mill's work.

Yen Fu, however, expressed a fundamental disagreement with Chuang Tzu's idea. He called it `an extreme form of individualism'.[66] He rejected Chuang Tzu's ideas because they only recognized man's desire to be free and ignored man's

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[62]Anthony Arblaster, *The Rise and Decline of Western Liberalism*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1984, p. 117.

[63]For Yen Fu's discussions of the Taoist idea of freedom and democracy, see CYFW, vol.1, p. 34; vol. 5, p. 1279; `Commentary Notes on *Lao Tzu*' (1905, CYFW, vol. 4, pp. 1075-1103); `Commentary Notes on *Chuang Tzu*' (1916, CYFW, vol. 4, pp. 1104-48).

[64]CYFW, vol. 4, p. 1104.

[65]In the first chapter of *Chuang Tzu*, Chuang Tzu tells a story of big fishes and small birds. He argues that if all things follow their own nature and do according to their own capacity, all are what they ought to be and equally happy. Commenting on Chuang Tzu's idea, Yen Fu wrote that `the great and small both find their happiness following their nature' (CYFW, vol. 4, p. 1105)

[66]CYFW, vol. 4, p. 1126; the term `individualism' was originally used by Yen Fu in English.

responsibility to family, society and humanity at large. In one of his comments on Chuang Tzu's idea of living according to nature, Yen wrote:

> Whenever I read Chuang Tzu's chapter `The Human World', I cannot help but pity Chuang Tzu. I will admit that this chapter contains some sound ideas. But in the last analysis, it only discusses how a man should follow his nature to make a living and to enjoy a good and long life. We all know that man differs from other creatures because he has received special favour from the heaven and earth as well as from his parents. As the highest creature on the earth, man has some endowed duties in his life. He may even be obliged to sacrifice his life for some benevolent and righteous courses. ... How can a man who is useless to others, who cares only about his own life and avoids any risk be regarded as the perfect man?[67]

Yen Fu apparently could not escape the Confucian idea that man has to cultivate himself, perform his duties towards society and choose the good way of life. This was probably the most important point over which Yen Fu differed from the mainstream of Western liberalism. Yen's overemphasis on self-cultivation prevented him from appreciating fully the liberal notion that `the individual must choose his values for himself, and construct his own morality.'

Yen Fu, however, did not believe that either the state or society should impose on the individual duties towards society. Rather he believed that individual should cultivate himself to highest excellence through free choice. In this sense, he perceived individual freedom of choice and individual cultivation as compatible. He argued that individual freedom of choice is essential to individual cultivation. He maintained that freedom of choice would provide the individual with the opportunity of developing his moral and intellectual capacities. `Without liberty', he wrote in his `Translator's Preface' to Mill's *On Liberty*, `the choice between good and evil would not proceed from oneself and one could only speak in terms of fortune and misfortune and the

[67]CYFW, vol. 4, p. 1109.

people's virtue thereby would not evolve.'[68]

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If Yen Fu hesitated to commit himself to the value of individual freedom of choice, he was firm in advocating economic liberalism. Both his experiences in Victorian Britain and his reading of Adam Smith's economic theory led him to put great faith in economic liberalism, a faith unparalleled among his contemporaries. He emphasized private ownership, a free market and minimum government intervention.

Yen Fu's adoption of economic liberalism was to address some important issues confronting Chinese elites in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: What is the best way of developing a modern economy? How should China deal with Western economic invasions? How should China confront issues such as social equality? At the heart of these issue was the issue of the state's role in economic and social life.

Historically the Chinese government played a rather passive role in organizing the economy. In contrast with its dominant role in moral and ideological affairs, the Chinese government followed laissez-faire principles and had an aversion towards intervention in economic matters.[69] This situation had changed drastically by Yen's time. Beginning with the `Self-strengthening' movement of the 1870s, various political movements as well as ideologies began to regard the state as a positive instrument for implementing China's modernization programs. There were several schools of thought or movements which emphasized the positive role of the state in this respect or in others.

First, beginning in the 1870s, the Ch'ing government put great effort in initiating modernization programs in order to increase what was generally called the

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[68]Yen Fu, *Ch'un-chi ch'uan-chieh lun* (A translation of John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty*), p. viii. The English translation follows Schwartz, p. 134.

[69]Max Weber, *The Religion of China: Confucianism and Taoism*, p. 79; for a critique of Weber's view, see Mark Elvin, `Why China Failed to Create an Endogenous Capitalism: A Critique of Max Weber' Explanation', working paper No. 25, Universiteit Van Amsterdam, Antropolisch-Sociologisch Centrum, p. 14.

wealth and strength of the nation. This effort was accelerated in the 1900s. The object was to build modern industry by direct governmental investment or government support in such forms as partial tax exemptions or the grant of monopolies over certain markets.[70]

Secondly, in the early decades of the century, socialist ideas spread and gained currency. As Martin Bernal has shown, socialist ideas could be found in the majority of reform-minded or radical intellectuals around the turn of the century. Some of the most important political figures such as K'ang Yu-wei, Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, Sun Yat-sen and his followers embraced socialist ideas of some form or another. There was a great concern among Chinese intellectuals over the issue of social equality, and the state was generally viewed as the instrument to achieve social equality.[71]

Thirdly, as has been mentioned, a popular demand in the anti-foreign campaigns of the early decades of this century was for the state to take a positive role in protecting national sovereignty, particularly economic sovereignty. This was particularly true of the movement of `reclaiming railway and mining rights from foreign powers' in the 1900s.[72]

One of Yen Fu's purposes in translating Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* was to respond to demands for the state to take on more positive roles. Utilizing his knowledge of Smith's work and his experience in Britain, Yen criticized official or semi-official enterprises, and advocated private enterprise. He championed the market economy and free foreign trade as against mercantilism and economic nationalism.

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[70]For a brief account of early modernization efforts of the Ch'ing government, see, Kuo Ting-yee, `Self-strengthening: the Pursuit of Western Technology', in *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 10, ed. J.K. Fairbank, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978, pp. 491-542.

[71]On the influences of socialist ideas on Chinese intellectuals at the turn of the century, see Martin Bernal, *Chinese Socialism to 1907*, London: Cornell University Press, 1976.

[72]The movement for reclaiming China's railway and mining rights from foreign powers was a widespread popular movement in the 1900s against the waves of China's concessions to foreign powers in controlling China's railways and mining industry in the wake of the Sino-Japanese war. For an account of the movement, see Lee En-han, *China's Quest for Railway Autonomy, 1904-1911*, Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1977, pp. 13-24.

Yen also criticized socialist ideas.

Yen Fu's first target of criticism was the official or semi-official run enterprises which emerged during the Self-strengthening movement. Yen had a strong aversion to state-owned or managed enterprise. `If enterprises are managed or controlled by officials', wrote Yen, `there will be numerous rules and regulations, red tape, high spending and low efficiency.'[73] In addition, he held that corruption would be inevitable in official or semi-official enterprises. Thus he argued that `all business which can be managed by private enterprise should be left for the people themselves. The government should not intervene in them.'[74]

Not only should government not run business itself, but it should not regulate the economy by controlling prices. Yen Fu was impressed by Smith's theory of market economy and praised it as the most penetrating ever found in history.[75] As an ardent believer in `scientific method', he interpreted Smith's theory of market force through the science of hydrodynamics:

> Smith applied hydrodynamics to economics. He knows that the price of goods will move towards balance just as water moves towards a level.... To allow free competition, economic balance will be ultimately achieved just as water will ultimately move to a level. On the contrary, intervention (in the price of goods) is just like building a dam on a slope to stop running water from the mountain. This can only achieve some temporary ... balance, rather than real balance.[76]

Under the market system, Yen Fu suggested, each will pursue his own interest. He will try to produce goods of better quality and greater quantity to compete

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[73]CYFW, vol. 1., p. 105.

[74]Ibid.

[75]Yen Fu, *Yuan-fu* (A Translation of Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*), vol. 1, p. 54.

[76]Ibid.

in the market. As a result, consumers will be able to obtain abundant, cheap goods easily, ranging from daily necessities to cultural and entertainment products.[77] By contrast, excessive government intervention, Yen Fu suggested, would hinder economic development by preventing the people's creativity from reaching full development. He insisted that `the people's creativity is inversely proportional to the degree of state intervention.'[78] He wrote:

> Wealth can only be produced by people. To stimulate people to produce more, there must be a free environment with less control or intervention from the government. When the state intervenes less, people will develop their capacities to the fullest. They will choose proper businesses according to their resources. They will devote full energies to their productive activities thus making them unbelievably successful. However, if the economic policy makers want to consciously promote certain industries or to discourage other industries, they can only produce disorder and damage industry. Their regulations will inevitably violate people's freedom and thereby hinder productivity.[79]

To be sure, Yen Fu by no means denied any role to government in economy. He asserted that the economic role of government should be limited to a very narrow sphere. Following Smith, he suggested that the function of the state should be confined only to those public works which were unlikely to be provided by the market because `the profit could never repay the expense to any individual or small number of individuals'.[80] Such functions included: 1) those things which cost more when they are run by the private sector and less by government, such as post and

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[77]CYFW, vol. 2, p. 516.

[78]Ibid., p. 516.

[79]Ibid., p. 407.

[80]Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, IV.ix.51, vol. 2, p. 688.

telecommunications; 2) those things which benefit society enormously but are unlikely to be undertaken by the private sector because they are less profitable, such as education, and 3) those things which people do not want to operate collectively or are unable to operate.[81]

As an ardent believer in limited government, Yen Fu was one of the few leading intellectuals at the turn of the century who was not influenced by socialist ideas. He rarely talked about social justice and equality. He openly rejected socialism (*she-hui chu-yi*) for its advocacy of public ownership.[82] He maintained that economic development depended on free competition and that socialism would end all competition.[83]

Stimulated by Smith's criticism of the mercantile system, Yen Fu also ardently advocated free trade with foreign countries and vigorously opposed economic nationalism. In *The Wealth of Nations*, Smith denounced what he called `the commercial, or mercantile system'.[84] One of the policies of this system was `restraints upon the importation from foreign countries of such goods as can be produced at home'.[85] Yen Fu was impressed by Smith's idea. He credited Smith's idea for the later success of the anti-Corn Law campaign in Britain.[86] He cited William Pitt as having said that `one can serve as a prime minister only after reading Smith's book.'[87]

In China's case, Yen Fu proposed a free trade policy and denounced all attempts to protect the domestic market. First, Yen held that protectionism might

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[81]Yen Fu, *Yuan-fu* (A Translation of Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*), vol. 2, pp. 589-90; for Smith's discussions on the subject, see *The Wealth of Nations*, V.i.c-g, pp. 723-814.

[82]CYFW, vol. 2, pp. 338-9.

[83]Ibid., p. 339.

[84]Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, IV.i, vol. 1, p. 429.

[85]Ibid., IV.ii, p. 452.

[86]Yen Fu, *Yuan-fu* (A Translation of Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*), vol. 2, p. 377.

[87]Ibid., p. 388.

benefit China in the short term, but would be harmful in the long term. He believed that China was extremely undeveloped economically and its industry would be at a disadvantage if it competed with foreign industries. Yet, `we have two advantages: we are a big country with abundant natural resources, and we have large number of hard-working people.'[88] With these two advantages, and with some capable persons leading the way, he continued, it would be not long before Chinese industries became even more competitive than those of Europe.[89] Secondly, he indicated that free foreign trade would benefit Chinese consumers and enable them to get access to an abundance of goods.[90] Thirdly, he dismissed the idea of keeping foreign trade in balance. Following Smith's criticism of the mercantilist belief `that wealth consists in money, or in gold and silver',[91] Yen argued that a surplus in foreign trade did not translate into the wealth of the country. He did not share the anxiety of Chinese officials about the imbalance of foreign trade:

> Since the 1840s, there has been a consensus that we should try to avoid imbalance in trade. So-called imbalance is nothing more than gold bullion outflow....Since Smith, it has become well known that gold is only one commodity... and nothing special. ... To regard gold as wealth, every country will fight for balance in foreign trade and pay too much attention to surplus or deficit. As a result, there will be many obstacles to achieving treaties on trade. Protectionism or even war may stem from trade disputes. Many people do not understand that the wealth or poverty of our country has nothing to do with trade balance.[92]

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[88]CYFW, vol. 4, p. 896.

[89]Ibid.

[90]Ibid., p. 895.

[91]Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, IV.i.1, vol. 1, p. 429.

[92]Yen Fu, *Yuan-fu* (A Translation of Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*), vol. 2, p. 396.

Yen Fu also opposed some political movements which exhibited economic nationalism, such as the movement in the 1900s for `reclaiming railway and mining rights from foreign powers'. He argued that the development of the railway and mining industries was vital to the development of manufacturing and commerce in China. In the process of developing China's railway and mining industries, foreign involvement was necessary and desirable. First, he argued, the railway and mining industries required huge capital. As private capital was scare in China, the investment in the railway and mining industries could only come from either the Chinese government or foreign companies. Since Yen Fu opposed the idea of government investing in and managing industries, he could only encourage foreign investment in the railway and mining industries. In the meantime, Chinese private investors should also be encouraged to buy shares in these foreign owned companies.[93] In addition to the importance of capital, Yen Fu further argued that foreign investment in and management of the railway and mining industries could bring to China much needed advanced technology and management skills. He suggested that `China has few experts in railway and mining industry', and therefore, `It is only natural that we should encourage foreigners to set up companies. Surely as capital comes from foreign investment, foreigners will control the companies and make profits from them. Nevertheless, China will benefit even more than foreigners.'[94]

Yen Fu's opposition to the government's efforts to protect China's newly developed industry and his opposition to economic nationalism have been among the most controversial of his economic ideas. In Chinese scholarship, a common criticism of Yen's economic ideas has been that Yen Fu was too dogmatic in following Smith's free market theory and failed to take into account the differences between Victorian Britain and nineteenth century China.[95] Chinese scholars particularly criticized Yen

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[93]CYFW, vol. 1, p. 105.

[94]Ibid., p. 106.

[95]Hou Hou-chi and Wu Ch'i-ching, *Chung-kuo chin-tai chin-chi ssu-hsiang shih* (A history of modern Chinese economic thought), volume 2, Ha-erh-ping: jen-min, 1984, p. 519.

Fu's idea of free foreign trade. Hou Hou-chi and Wu Ch'i-ching argued that Britain was the most advanced industrial nation in the nineteenth century and could benefit much from a free trade policy. China at that time was an extremely backward country. To pursue free trade without any protection would, in their opinion, destroy China's native industry and undermine any chance for China's economic independence.[96]

It is interesting to note a very different criticism of Yen Fu by Schwartz. Schwartz argued that the major weakness of Yen Fu's economic program was that he distorted Smith's ideas and subjected `Smith's economic principles to his own mercantilist purpose'.[97] Schwartz discerned `the familiar preoccupation with the wealth and power of the state' throughout Yen Fu's translation of *The Wealth of Nations*.[98] He believed this to be the fundamental feature of mercantilism.

Schwartz seemed to be unaware of Yen Fu's own criticism of mercantilist economics (*shang-tsung tzu chi-hsueh*), made when he opposed the economic nationalist movement of the 1900s.[99] Moreover, Schwartz seemed to have misunderstood some crucial ideas of mercantilism as well as some Chinese terms.

The term `mercantilism' first acquired significance at the hands of Adam Smith.[100] In *The Wealth of Nations*, Smith delivered his famous attack upon what he called the commercial or mercantile system in an argument about the balance of trade. The most influential work on the subject is Eli Heckscher's *Mercantilism*, which Schwartz quoted intensively. According to Heckscher, `mercantilism would...have all economic activity subservient to the state's interest in power.'[101] In the mercantilist

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[96]Ibid., p. 523.

[97]Benjamin Schwartz, *In Search of Wealth and Power*, p. 122.

[98]Ibid., p. 116.

[99]CYFW., vol. 1, p. 148. On Yen Fu's general criticism of nationalism, see Chapter III of this thesis.

[100]Mark Blaug, *Economic Theory in Retrospect*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, third edition, 1978, p. 10.

[101]Eli Heckscher, *Mercantilism*, London: Allen & Unwin, 1935, p. 15.

system, `power is conceived as an end in itself.'[102] What did Heckscher mean by `state power as an end in itself'? According to Heckscher, there is a fundamental difference between Smith's economic liberalism and various mercantilist theories. Smith's end is abundance and wealth, and state power is the means to wealth. `Mercantilists usually believed the reverse.'[103] Heckscher distinguished between the concepts of `state', `nation' and `country'. According to Heckscher, it is natural for various economic theories to pursue the interests of one's own `country' or `nation'. `The interests of the native country were the deciding factor in determining policy both under free trade and under mercantilism.'[104] By contrast, `the collective entity' for mercantilists, `was not a nation, unified by common race, speech and customs: the only decisive factor for them was the state.'[105]

> The state must have one outstanding interest, an interest which is the basis for all its other activities. What distinguishes the state from all other social institutions is the fact that, by its very nature, it is a compulsory corporation or, at least in the last instance, has the final word on the exercise of force in society; it has the `authority of authorities' (Kompetenz -Kompetenz), to borrow the terminology of that eminent German constitutional jurist, Jellineck.[106]

It is clear that by `power of the state', Heckscher meant state power over society. This was the very idea that Yen Fu attacked vigorously as we have shown above.

To differentiate Yen Fu's ideas from mercantilism, we can further discuss mercantilist means for achieving its ends. Heckscher suggested that although the

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[102]Ibid., p. 16.

[103]Ibid., p. 17.

[104]Ibid., p. 14.

[105]Ibid., p. 14.

[106]Ibid., p. 15.

difference between the ends of free trade and mercantilism was significant, `the most important difference did not lie in the choice of ends but in opinions as to the best way of achieving those ends, i.e.. in the choice of means.'[107] According to liberal economic theory, the means to achieve wealth and power in a nation is free trade. The means adopted by mercantilism, as Schumpeter stated, is `export monopolism', `exchange control', and pursuing `the balance of trade';[108] or as Heckscher calls it `a `fear of goods', a policy directed against imports instead of exports - in one word: protection.'[109] From the discussion of Yen Fu's ideas on trade above it is clear that his approach is the opposite of mercantilism.

As we have shown above, Yen Fu's economic ideas were largely copied from Smith. In following Smith, particularly in subscribing to the doctrine of the minimal state, Yen Fu certainly established himself as the pioneer of economic liberalism in modern China. However, the times were unfavourable to economic liberalism. China in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries experienced serious social and economic crises. There was outcry about the need to address some urgent social and economic issues, such as the development of a national economy as well as minimum economic security for the vast poor population. Because Yen was hostile to the positive role of state in the economy, he was apparently impotent to address credibly these issues other than leaving them to be resolved in an extremely undeveloped market.[110] This probably explained why Yen had little influence on economic policies

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[107]Eli Heckscher, `Mercantilism', in D.C. Coleman, ed. *Revisions in Mercantilism*, London: Methuen, 1969, p. 21.

[108]J.A. Schumpeter, *History of Economic Analysis*, Oxford University Press, 1954, pp. 338-62.

[109]Heckscher, `Mercantilism', p. 27.

[110]Some economic historians, notably Feuerwerker, have suggested that during the initial spurt of industrialization in `backward' countries, the state budget or an efficient banking system were necessary to the support of industry. He argued that one of the reasons for the failure of the late Ch'ing modernization programme was the inability of government to support industry. The Chinese government failed to `promote a modern banking system' and also failed to `invest in economic development from its own budget'. (Albert Feuerwerker, `Economic Trends in the Late Ching Empire: 1870-1911', in *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 11, p. 59.)

in his time.

VI

In his discussion of liberty, Yen Fu took pains to distinguish his ideas of liberty from the ideas of liberty held by radicals. As we have mentioned before, one of the motives of Yen's translation of Mill's *On Liberty* was to teach radical youth that the Western idea of freedom had its own built-in limits and could not be applied in `a stupid and destructive fashion'. By `stupid and destructive fashion', he referred to application of ideas of liberty held by various radical ideologies. Even before the publication of his translation of Mill's work, Yen had expressed his worry that radicalism might lead China down a dangerous revolutionary path. In his essay, `Dialogue between Host and Guest' (*chu-ke ping-yi*, 1902), he denounced radicals for their simplistic understanding of Western ideas and systems and for demanding rapid changes. He was particularly annoyed by the misconception of the idea of liberty and the violent means of pursuing liberty as expressed by a fashionable radical slogan: `to water the tree of liberty by blood'. He wrote:

> A handful of ignorant people advocate watering the tree of freedom by blood! They will not be able to achieve their goal [freedom], they can only seriously harm our nation. ... In the past, Britain...and France...had revolutions. ... The revolutions brought about great tragedy for their people. The people suffered and moaned from revolutions for hundreds of years.[111]

The idea of `watering the tree of freedom' was one of the most influential political mottos in radical writings of the early part of the century. The earliest expression of such an idea was found in a short poem, `Rousseau', published in 1901 in the *Hsin-min ts'ung-pao* (New citizen journal). It reads:

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[111]CYFW, vol. 1, p. 120.

There was a Frenchman named Rousseau,
Who advocated the new doctrine of social contract;
He called on people to kill,
To destroy authorities of monarchies.
To open the road of equality by force,
To water the plant of freedom by blood;
The day that [Rousseau's] words come true,
Will be the day of world revolution.[112]

Yen Fu was extremely irritated by this idea. He believed the slogan of `watering the tree of freedom by blood' was faulty not only in its militancy, but in its misconception of freedom. Because the motto of `watering the plant of freedom by blood' was propagated by radicals under the name of Rousseau, Yen Fu continually tried to undermine Rousseau's ideas of liberty.

Rousseau was probably the Western political thinker with the greatest influence on radicalism in China at the turn of the century.[113] His name was mentioned in China as early as the 1880s in works by foreign missionaries and Chinese diplomats.[114] After the Sino-Japanese war of 1894, some of Rousseau's works began to be translated into Chinese partly inspired by Yen Fu's propagation of Western ideas.[115] By 1903, the year which has been regarded as the turning point of

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[112]Quoted in Hsiung Yuen-tzu, *Chung-kuo chin-tai min-chu ssu-hsiang shih* (A history of democratic thought in modern China), Shanghai: jen-min, 1986, p. 322.

[113]Rousseau's influence on the modern Chinese revolution has not yet been explored fully either in Chinese or in Western scholarship. For a very brief account of Rousseau's influences on Chinese intellectuals in the late 1890s and the early part of this century, see Marianna Bastid-Bruguiére, `The Influence of Jean-Jacques Rousseau on Chinese Political Thought before the 1911 Revolution,' in Zhang Zhilian, ed. *China and the French Revolution*, Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1988, pp. 29-36.

[114]Hsiung Yuen-tzu, *Chung-kuo chin-tai min-chu ssu-hsiang shih* (A history of democratic thought in modern China), pp. 303-5.

[115]In 1898, a Chinese translation of Book I of the *Social Contract* by a Japanese scholar was published in China. From December 1900 to May 1901, another translation of Book I of the *Social Contract* by Yang Ting-tung was published in

the movement towards radical revolution,[116] Rousseau had become the most influential Western thinker among radical Chinese intellectuals, with the *Social Contract* taken by radical revolutionaries as their bible.[117] Tsou Jung (1885-1905), an ardent revolutionary, proudly called himself `the second Rousseau'. He declared, `I only wished to learn what Rousseau had done and did not care what happened to my writing.'[118] Ch'en T'ien-hua (1875-1905), another famous young radical, described Rousseau as a God-sent sage dispatched to save the people of the whole world. He suggested that Rousseau's ideas had stimulated the French people to undertake the great revolution and to achieve happiness and freedom.[119]

Even less radical intellectuals such as Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, considered Rousseau's ideas the best medicine for China's illness. Liang wrote:

> Among the dozens of modern European thinkers who can be regarded as sages in curing social and political problems, I believe that Rousseau's *Social Contract* is the most suitable prescription for China's disease.... Oh! the *Social Contract*! Come to the East please! We depend on you to help us to achieve a society of great peace.[120]

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installments in *Yi-shu hui-pien* (Collected translations), a journal published by a group of Chinese students in Japan. In 1902, Yang Ting-Tung translated the whole of the *Social Contract* from Japanese and published it in China.

[116]Martin Bernal, *Chinese Socialism to 1907*, p. 99; Michael Gasster, *Chinese Intellectuals and the Revolution of 1911: the Birth of Modern Chinese Radicalism*, p. 28.

[117]Marianna Bastid-Bruguiére, `The Influence of Jean-Jacques Rousseau on Chinese Political Thought before the 1911 Revolution,' in Zhang Zhilian, ed. *China and the French Revolution*, p. 30.

[118]Schiffrin, Herald, *Sun Yat-Sen and the Origins of the Chinese Revolution*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968, p. 273.

[119]Ch'en T'ien-hua, *Ch'en T'ien-hua chi* (Collected writings of Ch'en T'ien-hua), Shanghai: Hunan: jen-min, 1982, p. 50.

[120]Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, `Tzu-yu shu: p'o-huai chu-yi' (On liberty: destructionism), in *Yin-ping-shih ho-chi*, (Collected Works of Liang Ch'i-ch'ao), vol. ii, pp. 25-6.

Behind this enthusiastic applause for Rousseau was a very simplistic understanding of Rousseau's ideas, particularly his idea of liberty, among Chinese radicals. Unlike some contemporary Western liberal critics who find Rousseau hostile to real freedom,[121] modern Chinese radicals generally perceived Rousseau to be the greatest advocate of freedom among modern Western political thinkers. The most frequent quotation of Rousseau in the writings of radicals was his statement that `Man was born free, and he is everywhere in chains.'[122] Chinese radicals generally failed to see Rousseau's distinction between natural liberty and civil liberty - liberty within society.[123] They thus failed to attend the central issue Rousseau tried to address in his *Social Contract*, namely how men could be at once free and members of a political society.[124] The issue of freedom became wonderfully simple for Chinese radicals. For them liberty was an essential gift of Nature, which man possessed by virtue of their humanity alone. Only evil government would restrict people's natural liberty. The people should overthrow such a government by revolution in order to restore their natural liberty. As Tsou Jung argued, `Everyone must know the significance of freedom and equality. There is no one who is not free at birth, there is no one who is

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[121]See J. L. Talmon, *The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy*, London, 1955, pp. 38-50.

[122]J.J. Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, translated by Maurice Cranston, Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1968, p. 49.

[123]On Rousseau's ideas of natural liberty and civil liberty, see Robert Wokler, `Rousseau's Two Concepts of Liberty', in *Lives, Liberties and Public Good, New Essays in Political Theory for Maurice Cranston*, ed. George Feaver and Frederick Rosen, New York: St., Martin's Press, 1987, pp. 68-78.

[124]Rousseau states that his purpose in the *Social Contract* `is to consider *if*, in political society, there can be any legitimate and sure principles of government, taking men as they are, and laws as they might be.' (J.J. Rousseau, the *Social Contract*, trans. Maurice Cranston, p. 49.) Cranston noted that the *if* here is crucial. `Rousseau is not offering a plan for reform, nor is he writing the kind of history of sociology he provides in his *Discours sur l'inégalité*....In the *Social Contract* Rousseau is dealing, in the hypothetical mood, with abstract problems which seem to him to emerge from philosophical reflection on the actual nature of man and the possible order of laws and governments.' (`Introduction' to the *Social Contract*, op. cit., p. 27.)

not equal.'[125] `Demons necessarily obstruct these natural rights of our people.[126] We must sweep them aside and regain these rights, for revolution has as its objectives to remove suffering and to seek happiness.'[127] Chinese radicals generally did not bother to consider the possible conflicts between men's desires to be free and the need to live in a political society. `They were naively optimistic that once the revolution occurred it would bring a new era of national independence and individual liberty.'[128]

Like Chinese radicals, Yen Fu's knowledge of Rousseau seemed to be confined to the *Social Contract.* Yen made no attempt to conceal his dislike of Rousseau's ideas from the very beginning of his intellectual career. His earliest criticism of Rousseau can be found in his essay `The Dialogue between Host and Guest' of 1902 where he mentioned that Rousseau's *Social Contract* was not representative of the mainstream of modern Western ideas and had lately been criticized by many Western thinkers.[129] One year later, in his introduction to Mill's *On Liberty*, Yen Fu singled out for criticism Rousseau's idea that man is born free.[130] In his `Political Lectures' delivered in 1906, Yen Fu criticized Rousseau's political theory for being `deductive', Yen's synonym for `unscientific'.[131] In an essay of 1913, Yen Fu accused Rousseau of being responsible for the horror of the French Revolution.[132] In 1914, he published an essay entitled `A critical Review of Rousseau's *Social Contract*' (*min-yueh p'ing-yi*) which represented his most

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[125]Tsou Yung, *The Revolutionary Army* (*ke-ming chun*), translated into English by John Lust, Paris: Mouton & Co., 1968, p. 101.

[126]`Demons', a Buddhist term for evil spirits which obstruct the true path. Tsou here referred to the Ch'ing government.

[127]Tsou Yung, *The Revolutionary Army* (*ke-ming chun*), p. 99.

[128]Mary Rankin, *Early Chinese Revolutionaries*, p. 18.

[129]CYFW, vol. 1, p. 120.

[130]Yen Fu, *Ch'un-chi ch'uan-chieh lun* (A translation of John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty*), p. vii.

[131]CYFW, vol. 5, p. 1243.

[132]CYFW, vol. 2, p. 308.

comprehensive criticism of Rousseau.

Yen Fu's critique of Rousseau focused on the notion that man is born free because Yen identified this notion with Chinese radicalism. Like the radicals, Yen did not discern Rousseau's distinction between natural liberty and civil liberty. Rather he understood Rousseau as upholding the idea that man was born free and should be free in society. To repudiate this idea, Yen Fu adopted two different arguments. On the one hand, he pointed out that man was not born free. On the other hand, he tried to show that it was unscientific to conclude from man's innate freedom that man should have freedom in society.

Yen Fu's knowledge of British utilitarianism and evolutionary theory assisted him greatly in his efforts to show the fallacy of the idea of man's innate freedom. Bentham, in his *Anarchical Fallacies*, criticized the article of the French Declaration of Rights stating that `men (all men) are born free and remain free, and equal in respect of rights', to be `full of error' and `ambiguity'. Bentham argued:

> All men are born free? All men remain free? No, not a single man, not a single man that ever was, or is, or will be. All men, on the contrary, are born in subjection, and the most absolute subjection - the subjection of a helpless child to the parents on whom he depends every moment for his existence.[133]

Yen Fu might not have read Bentham's criticism of the idea that `all men are born free'. Yet his acceptance of some basic utilitarian principles certainly confirmed his position on the issue. His main criticism of Rousseau's idea of natural liberty was derived directly from nineteenth-century English evolutionary theory, particularly from T. H. Huxley's critique of Rousseau. We have already examined Yen Fu's translation and commentaries on Huxley's *Evolution and Ethics*. Yen Fu's knowledge of Huxley, however, was not confined to that treatise alone. He recorded that he read Huxley's other essays including `On the Natural Inequality of Men' and `Government:

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[133]Bhikhu Parekh, ed., *Bentham's Political Thought*, London: Croom Helm, 1973, p. 262.

Anarchy or Regimentation'.[134] He specifically mentioned that he read Huxley's criticism of Rousseau's ideas of freedom and equality.[135]

Huxley's criticism of Rousseau was found mainly in his essay `On the Natural Inequality of Men'. This essay was a response to what Huxley called `the revived Rousseauism' in Britain as represented by John Morley's work. Convinced that Rousseauism would lead people in the wrong direction, Huxley felt that he had a duty to `do something towards the counteraction of the fallacious guidance' proffered to the British people.[136] The main target of Huxley's criticism of Rousseau was the latter's `famous phrase' that `all men are born free and equal'. Huxley accused Rousseau of using `*a priori* method' and `fallacious assumptions' regardless of fact.[137]

Yen Fu probably knew of Huxley's criticism of Rousseau before 1909, the date he recorded in his diary because some of his criticisms of Rousseau before that date seemed to have also been taken from Huxley. In his introduction to *On Liberty* in 1903, he wrote:

> Rousseau states that man is born free in the opening paragraph of the *Social Contract*. This idea has been repudiated by later sages. They pointed out that a new-born infant acts like an animal. It cannot even know if it is hungry or full. How can it be said to be free?[138]

As we will see shortly, the later sages he referred to probably included Huxley. Yen Fu's major criticism of Rousseau, `A Critical Review of Rousseau's

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[134]Yen's dairy (March 1909), in CYFW, vol. 5, p. 1490; those essays by Huxley are available in Huxley's *Collected Essays*, volume 1, London: Macmillan, 1898.

[135]CYFW, vol. 5, p. 1490.

[136]Thomas Huxley, `On the Natural Inequality of Men', in Huxley, *Collected Essays*, vol. 1, pp. 295-6.

[137]Ibid., p. 298.

[138]Yen Fu, *Ch'un-chi ch'uan-chieh lun* (A translation of John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty*) p. viii.

Social Contract', in 1914 drew heavily on Huxley's `On the Natural Inequality of Men'. It is virtually an abridged translation of Huxley's essay with some of Yen's comments on China's situation. Following Huxley, Yen disputed Rousseau's claim of man being born free as contrary to the fact. Yen quoted an entire paragraph from Huxley's essay which reads:

> I have seen a considerable number of new-born infants. Without wishing to speak of them with the least disrespect - a thing no man can do, without, as the proverb says, `fouling his own nest' - I fail to understand how they can be affirmed to have any political qualities at all. How can it be said that these little mortals who have not even the capacity to kick to any definite end, nor indeed to do anything but vaguely squall, are equal politically, except as all zeros may be said to be equal? How can little creatures be said to be `free' of whom not one would live for four and twenty hours if it were not imprisoned by kindly hands and coerced into applying its foolish wandering mouth to the bread it could never find for itself?[139]

With Huxley, Yen Fu recognized that Rousseau's idea of man being born free might not refer to some actual condition of some of mankind now or in the past, but might refer to a purely hypothetical condition.[140] Rousseau's theory might be understood to claim that all men ought be free and equal, and freedom and equality therefore ought to be regarded as the basis of law and as demanding an immutable morality.[141] Yen Fu disputed Rousseau's idea even in this sense.

He argued that it is wrong to deduce any political principle solely from what `ought to be' and overlook `what has been', `what is', and `what can be'.[142] In

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[139]Thomas Huxley, `On the Natural Inequality of Men', in *Collected Essays*, vol. 1, pp. 305-6; for Yen Fu's statement, see CYFW, vol. 2, p. 336.

[140]CYFW, vol. 2, pp. 336-7.

[141]CYFW, vol. 2, p. 337.

[142]CYFW, vol. 2, p. 337; for Huxley's similar remarks, see his *Collected Essays*,

discussing moral and political theories, he claimed, one should avoid absolute speculation *(shih-li)*,[143] and make political judgement on the basis of examining `historical fact' and `the current circumstances'.[144]

The `historical fact' and `the current circumstances' Yen Fu referred to were closely related to his idea of social evolution. As a believer in evolutionary social theory, Yen considered the social and political order to be the product of a long period of a `natural evolutionary process.'[145] Since different societies followed different paths of evolution, `the present situation' in these societies varied. Yen did not believe that every society could establish a system which guaranteed individual liberty in the same manner. He maintained that the scope of individual liberty was largely dependent on the degree of social evolution. `The higher a society evolves, the wider is the scope of people's freedom.'[146] The degree of social evolution was related to the degree of moral and intellectual development of individuals who compose a society. Yen suggested that the higher degree of freedom in the West was founded on a higher degree of civilization of the people.[147] It is harmful, he believed, simply to copy the Western system regardless of the different level of the people's moral and intellectual development.[148]

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vol. 1, p. 312.

[143]CYFW, vol. 3, p. 648. Yen Fu's criticism of Rousseau's idea of freedom as based on `abstract speculation' is quite similar to Edmund Burke's criticism of Rousseau's ideas of freedom. Yen seemed have not read Burke's works. Yet he mentioned that he read Henry T. Buckle's *The History of Civilization in England* which contains discussions of Burke's ideas. (CYFW, vol 5, p. 1249). For Burke's criticism of Rousseau's idea of freedom, see Annie Marion Osborn, *Rousseau and Burke: a Study of the Idea of Liberty in Eighteenth-century Political Thought*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1940, pp. 1-26.

[144]CYFW, vol. 2, p. 337.

[145]CYFW, vol. 5, p. 1290.

[146]Yen Fu, *Ch'un-chi ch'uan-chieh lun* (A translation of John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty*), p. vii.

[147]CYFW, vol. 1, p. 120.

[148]CYFW, vol. 3, p. 648.

Yen Fu here faced a theoretical dilemma: on the one hand, he justified individual freedom mainly by its enhancement of the people's moral and intellectual capabilities. On the other hand, he regarded the same moral and intellectual capabilities as the precondition for the achievement of individual liberty. His dilemma was: Without individual freedom and individual choice, how can the individual develop his moral and intellectual capabilities? Without a high degree of moral and intellectual capability, how can a liberal system be maintained? This dilemma has puzzled several generations of Chinese liberals since Yen Fu. When Hu Shih, another famous modern Chinese liberal returned from America in 1910, he faced the same difficulty: `Without a good society, how can we have a good government? Without a good government, how can we have a good society?'[149]

Yen Fu was fully aware of this dilemma. When he emphasized moral and intellectual development as the precondition of individual liberty, he did not deny that the Chinese people, even in a lower degree of moral and intellectual development, should enjoy certain basic freedoms. His real intention here was not to argue about the condition of liberty theoretically, but to argue about the means of achieving liberty. By raising the issue of the conditions of liberty, he argued that freedom ought to be achieved through piecemeal reform, rather than revolution. He wrote in a letter to a renowned reformer, Hu Li-yuan, in 1909:

> You said in your letter that freedom is the ultimate goal of mankind, the principal rule for any society and the criterion of judging other doctrines. This is a very sensible view. I too believe that mankind should regard freedom as one of its highest goals, but I believe that the means (*tu-su*) of reaching this goal could be different because the evolutionary degrees that various societies have reached are different.[150]

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[149]Quoted in Chou Min-chih, *Hu Shih and Intellectual Choice in Modern China*, Ann Arbour: University of Michigan Press, 1984, p. 120.

[150]CYFW, vol. 3, p. 594.

Yen was afraid that if freedom were treated as the absolute principle, it would encourage radicalism. He often spoke of the destructive results which the doctrine of absolute freedom might bring about. `The doctrine of extreme freedom and equality can spread like a storm, ... it will destroy millions of lives.'[151] He repeatedly quoted from Madame Roland's famous remark made during the French Revolution, `Freedom, freedom! How many evils are done in your name?'[152]

VII

In his criticism of the radical motto `watering the tree of freedom by blood', Yen Fu also dismissed the idea that a revolution overthrowing the old regime and establishing democracy could bring freedom to the people. The basis of Yen Fu's dismissal of such an idea was his definition of freedom which implied that the determining factor of the degree of individual freedom was the scope of governmental power, rather than the form of government. Regardless of what form of government pertained, democratic or tyrannical, if the scope of governmental power was great, the people under this government would lose their freedom. Yen Fu compared the effects of the two kinds of government on freedom:

> Supposing there is a benevolent paternalistic government which dictates to people the time of sowing and harvesting, fixes the profit rate of commerce, regulates industry, decides the proper way for intellectuals to behave, and leads people like animals by the halter so that they need not think for themselves. Such a government will be regarded as a God-like parent in China. Chinese people will consider themselves to be enjoying a golden age. Western people, however, would believe that this government is actually destroying their freedom. The people under this government would be no different

[151]CYFW, vol. 3, p. 608.

[152]CYFW, vol.3, pp. 645, 690.

from slaves. Therefore, in Western language, `paternalistic' government' does not have good connotations.[153]

In contrast to paternalistic government, the people could enjoy more freedom under a very harsh government, although their freedom was not secure. Yen Fu took another example:

> During of our Yuan and Ming dynasties (1279-1644), Russia was controlled by the Mongols. Historians have described the Mongols' rule as being of a harshness and inhumanity unparalleled in history. The Russian people, however, enjoyed great freedom at that time. They lived and worked even without knowing what the government was. The Mongols chose some cities to live separately from Russians. When they needed something, they went out to plunder wealth. When they had sufficient living material they just left people alone. ... Although such a government is extremely inhumane, people can still have their freedom under it.[154]

Yen Fu was of course not suggesting that the way the Mongols ran Russia was an ideal way of ordering a society. As we shall see, he held that freedom must be protected by law. What Yen Fu did suggest was that the scope of state power, more than any other factor, determined the degree of freedom enjoyed by the people. In terms of protecting individual freedom, Yen remarked, democracy did not fare any better than other form of government. Democracy meant only that sovereign power was held by the people. It did not indicate how great the government's power would be. In fact, Yen Fu believed, following Tocqueville, that a democratic government could be more dangerous to individual freedom than an authoritarian government:

> Between a democratic government which wields great power and an

[153]CYFW, vol. 5, 1287.

[154]CYFW, vol. 5, p. 1283.

> authoritarian government with limited power, which is better? which is more harmful? ... Tocqueville, a great French politician ... maintained that an authoritarian government seems to be imperious, but it is in fact fearful of the people. ... By contrast, a democratic government better understands the people's wishes and is often supported by the majority. It will therefore be more aggressive and dare to assert more control over people.[155]

Thus, Yen Fu argued that the efforts of radicals to overthrow the Ch'ing government and to build a democratic system in order to achieve individual freedom were wrong-headed. The only way to protect the people's freedom in China was to reform gradually current social and political systems by implementing comprehensive legal reform and establishing the rule of law. Through a legal system, a line of demarcation between the rights of the individual and that of the government and society could be codified.

Yen Fu's emphasis on the importance of a proper legal system for freedom stemmed from his experience in Britain and his reading of Montesquieu's *The Spirit of the Laws*. In his introductory biography of Montesquieu, he remarked that Montesquieu `spent over two years in London observing English legal institutions and proclaimed that only the people of England could be called free.'[156] Yen Fu shared Montesquieu's belief that freedom could only be secured by a legal system like that in operation in Britain. Yen Fu praised Montesquieu's well-known idea that `liberty is a right of doing whatever the law permits' as `the most profound idea in Montesquieu's discussion of political liberty.'[157] This idea, he suggested, defined `the essence of liberty'.[158]

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[155]Ibid., p. 1286.

[156]Yen Fu, *Fa-yi* (A translation of Montesquieu's *The Spirit of the Laws*), vol. 1, pp. vii-viii.

[157]Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, Bk XI:3, p. 150; Yen Fu, *Fa-yi*, vol. 1, p. 219.

[158]Yen Fu, *Fa-yi*, vol. 1, p. 219.

It was not novel at the turn of the century to advocate legal reform based on Western or Japanese models. In fact, in the decade of the 1900s, the Ch'ing government made great efforts to modernize China's legal system and create a constitutional framework. It appointed Sen Chia-pen, a well-known legal scholar, as imperial commissioner in charge of law reform.[159]

By comparison with Sen Chia-pen, Yen Fu was hardly a major player in the legal reform of the late Ch'ing period. His main interests were in social, political and cultural issues. He did not discuss in detail the reform of the penal code, civil law or commercial law as did Sen Chia-pen. Nevertheless, Yen Fu's awareness of the importance of law in protecting individual freedom, his experience in Britain and his knowledge of Western legal theories obtained mainly from Montesquieu allowed him to raise some important issues such as the difference between the traditional Chinese legal system and the Western one and the relationship between law and liberty. These issues were hardly discussed by his contemporaries.

Yen Fu had a much stronger awareness than his contemporaries of the main differences between the Chinese legal system and modern Western ones. First, he had a clear idea of the difference between `the rule of law' in the modern West and `the rule of virtuous men' in traditional China. As Schwartz observed, `he drew a stark and striking contrast at one point between a state in which the administration of justice depends on a universal, impersonal system of laws' and a state in which the administration of justice depends mainly on the virtue of judges.[160] Yen regarded all law in China to be simply a matter of `the higher ruling the lower'. People's lives, property and freedom were not protected by a comprehensive legal system, but depended entirely on the rulers' benevolence.[161] The Western legal system, Yen Fu remarked, was entirely different from the Chinese one:

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[159]For an account of the late Ch'ing legal reform, see Joseph Kai Huan Cheng, *Chinese Law in Transition: The Late Ch'ing Law Reform, 1901-1911*, Ph.D thesis, Brown University, 1976.

[160]Benjamin Schwartz, *In Search of Wealth and Power*, p. 153.

[161]Yen Fu, *Fa-yi* (A translation of Montesquieu's *The Spirit of the Laws*), vol. 1, p. 258.

> The most irreconcilable difference between the political systems of the East and the West is over the matter of law. The Western legal system originated from ancient Greece and Rome, and improved gradually over a long period. To mention some advantages of this system: ... Law is a special subject of learning; ...lawyers make up a profession;...there is a jury system;...the selection and removal of jurors is undertaken by courts; ...only judges have the power to administer justice;...the judges have higher salaries than other professions. Due to these practices, there has been no corruption in their administration of justice and no torture in their interrogation. Their punishments of crimes are balanced and lighter than ours. In consequence, their people are happy. While they enjoy freedom, they also keep law in their minds. They enjoy the fruits of their hard work and do not infringe upon others' rights or cheat others. How can one say such people are not fortunate?[162]

Secondly, Yen Fu considered the nature of Chinese law to be essentially punitive. In Confucianism, law was the means of punishment or reward in enforcing morality; in Legalism, law was the means of punishment or reward by which the rulers could effectively run the country. Neither of the two schools had developed the idea of individual legal rights. Neither subjected the ruler to the restraint of law. Therefore, law in traditional China was designed only to regulate or punish people. The emperor was above the law and could do whatever he wanted without any restraint under law.

This type of law, Yen Fu believed, was not the law in the modern Western sense. It could do nothing to protect an individual's freedom. `The government can do whatever it wants to do in dealing with people. People's time, labour, property and families are all controlled by the command of the rulers. If people hope to escape

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[162]Yen Fu, *Yuan-fu* (A Translation of Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*), vol. 2, p. 901.

from the tyranny of the rulers they can only appeal to rebellion. There exists no law by which people can fight against tyrannical rulers."[163]

The law China needed to protect the people's freedom was not the means of punishment by which the rulers controlled the people. Rather it should be a code to define the proper boundaries of individual rights and the power of political authority. In this sense, law was similar to a contract.[164] Such a law could be used by the people as a weapon to fight for their rights against the tyranny of the authority.[165] In this respect, Yen Fu probably shared Montesquieu's idea that `political liberty consists in security, or, at least, in the opinion that we enjoy security."[166]

The preceding exploration of Yen Fu's ideas of liberty has clearly indicated that Yen Fu was committed to some basic ideas of what Hayek called British liberalism. The foundation of Yen's idea of liberty was his definition of liberty in a negative sense. Following from such a definition, he insisted that a frontier must be drawn between the area of private life and public authority. He advocated a limited governmental role both in moral and in economic spheres. He considered the rule of law to be essential for protecting individual freedom. He argued for gradual change rather than radical change. There were, to be sure, differences between Yen Fu's idea of liberty and those of British liberals. Particularly, on the issue of individual freedom of choice, Yen Fu was influenced by Confucian tradition which emphasized the individual's duties towards society rather than individual rights in society. As a result, Yen Fu did not go so far as to embrace individualism firmly. Nevertheless, Yen Fu's overall idea of liberty departed significantly from the Chinese political tradition and was close to Western thought, particularly that of the British liberals in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This established him as one of the leading liberal thinkers in modern China.

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[163]CYFW, vol. 5, p. 1284.

[164]CYFW, vol. 5, p. 1284.

[165]CYFW, vol. 5, p. 1284.

[166]Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, Bk XII:1, p. 183.

Chapter VI
Dilemma of Democracy

I

Complementing his vision of a liberal society, Yen Fu paid great attention to the reform of China's political institutions. He was one of the intellectual pioneers of modern China in propagating Western democratic values and challenging despotism in traditional China.

Unlike his idea of freedom, which drew little from traditional Chinese thought, Yen's ideas of democracy bore significant influence from traditional Chinese thought. His discussion of democracy, to a great degree, addressed an age-old debate in China on the origin, nature and ends of government.

There was a deep-rooted belief in traditional Chinese culture that government should be somehow reflective of the people's interests and wills. The earliest expression of this belief could be traced to an ancient religious faith in `the Will of Heaven' (*t'ien-yi*). From the very beginning of Chinese civilization, the conception of an almighty Heaven occupied a central place in Chinese religion and culture.[1] As Marcel Granet observed, `Heaven appeared as a sovereign power, basically unique and omnipotent; it was endowed with the essential attributes of a supreme God.'[2] The secular rulers, whether kings or emperors, were regarded as Heaven's agents who were endowed with powers to carry out the will of Heaven.[3] As Heaven did not grant its mandate to any royal lineage permanently, any ruler who claimed the right to rule had to demonstrate his possession of `the mandate of Heaven' (*t'ien-ming*). One way of doing this was to obtain the people's acceptance. A popular belief dating from the early period of Chinese civilization related the will of Heaven with the will of the people. As the *Book of Documents* (*shu-ching*) stated: `Heaven hears as the people

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[1]Marcel Granet, *The Religion of the Chinese People* (1922), trans. Maurice Freedman, New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1975, p. 64.

[2]Ibid., p. 72.

[3]Ibid., p. 65.

hear. Heaven sees as the people see.' `Heaven follows what the people want.'[4]

This faith in the link between the will of Heaven and the will of the people later developed into two important doctrines in classical Confucian works. The first was Mencius' notion of the primacy of the people. Mencius asserted that the ruler was empowered by Heaven for the benefit of the people. Thus the ruler should not only treat the people's welfare as the end of government, but also treat the will of the people as the last authority of the country.[5] The second was the notion that government was public property (*kung-chan*). It thus should be run by men of talent, virtue, and ability.[6]

These Confucian ideals, however, were never realized in China except that it was said to have existed in the fictitious `three dynasties' of antiquity. The ideas of Legalism, a rival school to Confucianism in the period of Warring states, by contrast, were applied to shape China's political system. Unlike the Confucian emphasis on the importance of the people, the Legalists advocated the absolute authority of rulers. As Han Fei-tzu (C. 280-233 B.C.), the most important thinker in the Legalist school stated, the monarch had absolute authority over his people and commanded absolute obedience from them.[7] No matter how the monarch behaved, people had no rights of disobedience or rebellion because the monarch derived his authority from his position as a monarch, rather than from his moral virtue.[8] The Legalist idea of despotic monarchy constituted the foundation of the political system of the Ch'in Dynasty (221-208 B.C.), the first unified empire in Chinese history. From the Ch'in to the

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[4]Quoted from Sebastian de Grazia ed., *Masters of Chinese Political Thought: from the Beginnings to the Han Dynasty*, New York: the Viking Press, 1973, p. 17 (translation revised).

[5]Mencius, *Mencius*, trans. D. C. Lau, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1970, p. 196.

[6]The earliest expression of this ideal was in the *Li-yun*, a chapter of *The Book of Rites* (*Li-chi*). *Li-yun* was long attributed to Confucius himself, but is now believed to have been written long after Confucius in the third or fourth century B. C.

[7]Hsiao Kung-chuan, *Chung-kuo cheng-chi ssu-hsiang shih* (A history of Chinese political thought), vol. 1, Taipei: Lien-ching, 1982, vol. 1, p. 245.

[8]Ibid., p. 247.

collapse of the Ch'ing dynasty in 1911, the Chinese political system could be, to varying degrees, called despotic government.[9]

During this long period of despotic rule, the tension between the Confucian ideal of popular sovereignty and the reality of despotic rule never ceased among Confucian intellectuals. To be sure, many Confucian scholars bowed to reality and accommodated themselves to the despotic system. Nevertheless, this tension motivated many other intellectuals to criticize the prevailing despotism and seek solutions which would effect a `return' to the `Golden Age'.[10]

The most important criticism of despotism developed before China's contact with the West occurred during the late Ming and early Ch'ing period. After centuries of ruthless rule under the Yuan and Ming dynasties characterized as `despotism at its height' in Chinese history,[11] serious reflection on and criticism of the despotic political system emerged. Huang Tsung-hsi (1610-1695 A.D), Tang Tseng (1630-1704 A.D.), Ku Yen-wu (1613-1682 A.D.) and Wang Fu-chih (1619-1692) were among the most important figures in this intellectual movement. They vigorously criticized the despotic system focusing on the concentration of power in the imperial institutions and in the person of emperor. Huang Tsung-hsi, in particular, directly challenged the monarchial system and asserted that the monarch was only a `guest' while the people were `hosts' in the country.[12] The essence of political discussions of the late Ming and early Ch'ing scholars was their intention to `return' to the classical doctrine of `the primacy of the people'. Their efforts `followed the classical tradition of the Pre-Ch'in period on the one hand, and initiated modern intellectual trends on

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[9]F. W. Mote, `The Growth of Chinese Despotism', in *Oriens Extremus*, 1960, p. 9.

[10]Ching, Yao-chi, *Chung-kuo min-pen ssu-hsiang fa-chan shih* (Historical development of the idea of the primary of the people in China), Taipei: The National Political University, 1964, Chapter 4-6.

[11]F. W. Mote, `The Growth of Chinese Despotism', p. 18.

[12]Huang Tsung-hsi, *Ming-i tai-fang lu* (A plan for the prince), Shanghai: Chung-hua, 1955, pp. 1-3, also see de Bary, `Chinese Despotism and the Confucian Ideal: A Seventeenth Century View', in *Chinese Thought and Institutions*, ed. John K. Fairbank, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957, pp. 170-2.

the other'.[13]

More extensive and widespread reflection on and criticism of the traditional political system emerged again in the late Ch'ing period. This reflection and criticism of the traditional political system differed from that of the late Ming and early Ch'ing period in that it was given great impetus by China's contact with the West. Beginning in the 1840s, a growing number of intellectuals became aware of the existence of different political systems in the West. Influential Confucian scholars such as Wei Yuan (1794-1856), Hsü Chi-yü (1795-1873), Wang T'ao (1828-1897), Cheng Kuan-ying (1842-1923), Ho Kai (1859-1914), Hu Li-yuan (1847-1916) `had been thoroughly inseminated with the demand for changes of the governmental structure generally, and more particularly for the creation of a parliamentary system'.[14] They saw the democratic system in the West as a new way of achieving the Confucian ideal of `harmony between the rulers and the ruled'.

The political ideas of Yen Fu must be understood within the framework of this continued effort among Chinese intellectuals to search for a new, or, at least, renewed, political order. There was a stronger intellectual resonance between Yen Fu's idea of democracy and the Confucian tradition than Chinese or Western scholars have recognized thus far. As we will show shortly, Yen Fu on the one hand consciously accepted certain basic Confucian ideas, such as Mencius's idea of `the primacy of the people',[15] while on the other hand, he perhaps unconsciously brought certain traditional values to his interpretation and propagation of Western democratic ideas.

More than those of his intellectual predecessors, however, Yen Fu's idea of political institutions bore the influence of modern Western democratic ideas and systems. He had first-hand experience in Britain and he possessed knowledge of the

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[13]Hsiao Kung-chuan, *A History of Chinese Political Thought*, vol. 2, p. 557.

[14]Lloyd E. Eastman, `Political Reformism in China before the Sino-Japanese War', in *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. xxvii (Aug. 1968), p. 698. For a general account of the ideas of political reform in Late Ch'ing China, see Liao Sheng-hsiung, `The Quest for Constitutionalism in Late Ch'ing China: the Pioneering Phase', Ph.D Thesis, the Florida State University, 1978.

[15]CYFW, vol. 3, p. 33.

structure and workings of the British system. More importantly, he had a better understanding than his contemporaries of the principles underlying democratic systems in the West and was better equipped with knowledge of modern democratic theories.

As has been noted, Yen Fu drew greatly from Montesquieu's *The Spirit of the Laws*, particularly the latter's criticism of despotism. In addition to Montesquieu, J.S. Mill and Tocqueville seemed to have influenced Yen Fu's idea of political institutions. Yen Fu's translation of Mill's *On Liberty* and *A System of Logic* were well known. There is some evidence that Yen Fu might have read Mill's main work on democracy - *Considerations on Representative Government.*[16] As will be shown later, some important ideas in Yen Fu's discussion of government bear strong similarities to those found in Mill. Yen certainly read Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* which was among the books in Yen Fu's library.[17] He referred to Tocqueville frequently when arguing that democracy could promote public spirit among the people. He also quoted Tocqueville's conception of `the tyranny of the majority' to support his somewhat lukewarm position on democratic reform in China.[18]

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[16]In his 1913 essay `On Party' (*shuo-tang*), when Yen traced the origin and development of Western political parties, he mentioned that the emergence of political parties in the West was a rather new phenomenon. `It was not even discussed by Mill in his book of 1860 on representative government.' (CYFW, vol. 2, p. 300. Mill's *Considerations on Representative Government* was in fact published in 1861.) In the same essay, Yen Fu also stated that in recent debates on parliamentary reform in Britain, some argued against `one person, one vote' and recommended that the educated have more than one vote. This might refer to Mill's plural voting proposal in his *Considerations on Representative Government* in which the rich and highly-educated citizens could have one or more extra votes.

[17]Most of Yen Fu's personal library has been lost. A small portion of his collections is now in the library of Nanking University, China. Among those books is de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* (trans. George Lawrence, New York: the Colonial Press, 1900).

[18]CYFW, vol. 1, p.147; vol. 5, p. 1286.

II

As with his other discussions of social and political issues, Yen Fu insisted that the issue of democracy must be examined by `scientific' methods. As a start, he called for a classification of political constitutions. There were inconsistencies, however, in Yen Fu's own classifications of constitutions, which have caused much confusion and controversy among scholars of Yen Fu. Yen esteemed democracy in his early writings and held critical views of it later. By the same token, he denounced monarchy earlier and spoke favourably of it later.[19] These changes have been interpreted as manifestations of Yen Fu's shift of position on the issue of democracy.[20] While there is truth in this argument, I would argue that Yen's shift of position on the issue of democracy was not as drastic as it may have appeared. To be sure, his idea about the best form of government, particularly for China, shifted in response to increasingly influential radicalism. Nevertheless, his basic ideas remained by and large unchanged. The perception that he changed his position drastically was caused by Yen's inconsistencies in using the concepts of democracy, monarchy and despotism over time.

Before 1902 when he started to translate Montesquieu's *The Spirit of the Laws*, Yen Fu's classification of government followed Aristotle closely. In his letter to Liang Ch'i-ch'ao in 1897, Yen challenged Liang's remark that China had a democracy in ancient times. He pointed out that democracy was entirely absent from China's history and was a creation of the West both as an institution and as a concept. He told Liang that `the European governmental forms are classified into three: monarchy is the system in which the monarch rules over people; aristocracy is the system in which the nobles govern cooperatively; democracy is the system in which the supreme power is vested in the people. Democracy is also called *kung-chan* or *he chung*.'[21]

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[19]Chou Chen-fu, *Yen Fu ssu-hsiang shu-p'ing* (A critical interpretation of Yen Fu's thought), pp. 235-8; Wang Shih, *Yen Fu Chuang* (Biography of Yen Fu), pp. 115-23.

[20]Ibid.

[21]The Chinese phrase *kung-chan* literally means `public property' and *he-chung* means `putting the people together.' Yen Fu's letter to Liang is apparently no longer extant. The quotation above is from Liang's reply letter to Yen in 1897, in CYFW,

Of the three types of regime Aristotle defined, Yen Fu never took aristocracy seriously. Indeed he hardly referred to any system as an aristocracy either in Chinese history or in the West. Monarchy in Yen Fu's writings then referred to the system in which the monarch had absolute power. Certainly the traditional Chinese political system exemplified this category. He denounced the Chinese `monarchies' since the Ch'in Dynasty as `the greatest piracy in stealing the sovereignty of the country from the people',[22] and asserted that `the decline of our yellow race can be attributed to the monarchical system'.[23]

For Yen Fu in this period, democracy did not necessarily mean that the people ruled, but simply that they had a voice in governmental affairs. When Yen remarked that in the West `freedom is regarded as foundation (*t'i*) and democracy as functional (*yung*)',[24] and when he admired democracy in the West for creating great harmony between the ruler and the ruled,[25] he mainly had the British system in mind. However, the British political system in the late nineteenth century was a constitutional monarchy rather than a democracy in the twentieth-century sense. Yen Fu's endorsement of democracy in this period was far from embracing a democratic system in the contemporary sense. It only meant that he preferred a system in which the people had a voice in political affairs.

Yen Fu's classification of governments changed after he began to translate Montesquieu's *The Spirit of the Laws* in 1902. In his `Biography of Montesquieu' published in 1904, Yen spoke highly of Montesquieu's classification of constitutions into democracy, monarchy and despotism. Aware that Montesquieu's classification was based on Aristotle's,[26] he suggested that the former represented a scientific advance over the latter:

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vol. 5, p. 1568.

[22]CYFW, vol. 1, p. 35.

[23]Ibid., vol. 5, p. 1568.

[24]Ibid., vol. 1, p. 11.

[25]Ibid., p. 31.

[26]Ibid.

> Aristotle's classification is based entirely on the number of sovereign people and does not catch the key issue of government. Therefore it has been rejected by scholars lately. Montesquieu's classification, in contrast, is less concerned with the number of sovereign people. It instead examines the different principles and natures of various types of government. It is therefore more plausible.[27]

What impressed Yen Fu about Montesquieu's classification was Montesquieu's distinction between monarchy and despotism based on their different natures and principles. The notion of despotism had been a political term in Western political thought ever since it was used by Aristotle and other Greek philosophers.[28] Nevertheless it was due to Montesquieu's innovation that the concept was placed at the centre of political theory in the second half of the eighteenth century and subsequently gained its significance. Not surprisingly, the concept of despotism is regarded as Montesquieu's `greatest innovation in the classifications of government'.[29] Montesquieu's analysis of despotism depended to a considerable extent upon empirical assertions about the nature and principle of despotism as found in the Orient, including China.[30] This certainly served Yen Fu's purpose of understanding the difference between traditional Chinese government, which he called monarchy in his early writings, and constitutional monarchy in the West. From Montesquieu, Yen Fu understood that although the number of sovereign people was an important indicator of the nature of a government, the structure and principles of a government characterized its nature even more clearly. Monarchy and despotism, he wrote, were

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[27]Ibid., vol. 2, p. 239.

[28]For the origin and development of the term, see R. Koebner, `Despot and Despotism: Vicissitudes of A Political Term', in *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, vol. 14 (1951), pp. 275-302.

[29]M. Richter, *The Political Theory of Montesquieu*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977, p. 71.

[30]Ibid.

both regimes ruled by one man in form, but their structure and principles were utterly different.[31] In despotism, no law existed; the despot could do whatever as he pleased. In a monarchy, the monarch must obey the law; he could not act at will.[32] The real difference between monarchy and despotism was, Yen Fu concluded, that the former was a lawful government and the latter was a lawless one.

After beginning his translation of *The Spirit of the Laws*, Yen Fu in most cases followed Montesquieu in his use of the concepts of despotism, monarchy and democracy. He always sharply contrasted despotism on the one the hand with more benign forms of government including monarchy and democracy on the other. He held that the apparent similarity between monarchy and despotism was deceptive. Monarchy was much closer to democracy in nature than to despotism. While monarchy and democracy differed in the number of persons who held sovereign powers, both of them had laws which bound ruler and ruled alike in contrast to despotism which was a lawless government. Therefore both democracy and monarchy were constitutional governments and possessed the essence of democracy.[33]

III

Among the three forms of government, according to Montesquieu, Yen Fu was highly critical of the despotic form. He criticized despotism both by denouncing the traditional Chinese political system as despotic, and by condemning despotic ideas in traditional Chinese thought. He argued that the Chinese political system from the Ch'in Dynasty (221-208 BC), the first unified empire, `has been despotic as described in *The Spirit of the Laws*.'[34] The concept of despotism he used to define the traditional

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[31]CYFW, vol. 2, p. 239.

[32]Ibid.

[33]Ibid., p. 240.

[34]Yen Fu, *Fa-yi* (A translation of Montesquieu's *The Spirit of the Laws*), Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1931, Book V, p. 29.

Chinese political system was not, however, entirely the same as Montesquieu's original concept.[35] He qualified Montesquieu's conception of despotism significantly to suit the Chinese case. Unlike Montesquieu, he did not regard terror as a distinctive characteristic of despotism. He expressed doubt that there had ever existed for long anywhere, either in Asia or in Europe, a political system based on terror.[36] Even the most tyrannical rulers in the history of China or elsewhere in Asia, he argued, had to claim a certain moral basis of legitimate authority transcending their own individual wills and the machinery of terror.[37] Force, coercion and terror alone could never maintain a government for a long time. Any ruler, no matter how despotic he was, had to gain a certain support from the ruled, for the sheer `force' of one despot could not overrun the `force' of millions.[38]

Yen Fu further argued that the characteristic of paternalism was of equal, if not greater, significance than the characteristic of terror in Chinese politics. There had been no lack of virtuous and benevolent rulers in China's political history. The rulers who based their rule solely, or mainly, on terror were the exception, rather than the rule. The distinctive characteristic of despotic government, for Yen Fu, did not lie in the way despots ruled, but in the nature or structure of its government. The reason he called China's political system despotic was not because rulers were never benevolent, but because no system had ever been developed to prevent a ruler from using terror when he wished to do so. He distinguished a `benevolent system' from `benevolent

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[35]In *The Spirit of the Laws*, Montesquieu defines despotism, like the two other types of government, in terms of its nature (or structure), and principles (or operative passions). The nature of despotism is that the despot exercises virtually complete power over subjects. The basic principle of despotic government is fear. It requires that all subjects be so obsessed by fear that they obey completely and passively. (Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, Bk II:5, p. 18; Bk III:9&10, pp. 26-8)

[36]Yen Fu, *Fa-yi* (A translation of Montesquieu's *The Spirit of the Laws*), Bk V, p. 38.

[37]Ibid.

[38]CYFW, vol. 5, p. 1308.

rulers'.[39] The former, he claimed, was more important than the latter. `A country's peace and its people's rights are best protected by good systems, not by virtuous persons.'[40] In the most prosperous times in China's history, he asserted, China had only benevolent emperors, rather than a benevolent system. Thus, `when a tyrannical ruler came to power, the previous paternalistic government would suddenly become a tyrannical government as cruel as a wolf.'[41]

Yen Fu discussed several aspects of despotic structure in traditional China: 1) the emperor, rather than the people, held sovereign power; 2) the ruler was not accountable to his subjects; 3) the ruler was not subject to any fundamental laws; and 4) no institutional checks of any form balanced the absolute power of the emperor.

The cardinal characteristic of the Chinese despotic system which Yen Fu criticized was that the emperor held sovereign power over the country and treated the whole country like his own property. `Since the Ch'in', he claimed, `there has existed no nation or no country, but only one family [the royal family]. When one family rose to power, millions of people all became its slaves.... When this family was overthrown, the whole government would be destroyed too. Our people would be transferred to another family just as slaves are transferred to another master.'[42] Following Montesquieu, he indicated that `the people under the despotic system are absolutely equal in the sense that they are all slaves of the despot.'[43] In this sense, he compared the status of the Chinese people under despotic rulers with that of slaves in ancient Greece and Rome. The difference between the social status of the Chinese people and slaves in those ancient societies was, for Yen Fu, not greater than the difference between the slaves in Sparta and those in Athens.[44]

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[39]Yen Fu, *Fa-yi* (A translation of Montesquieu's *The Spirit of the Laws*), Bk. XI, p. 45.

[40]Ibid.

[41]Ibid.

[42]Ibid., Bk V, p. 29.

[43]Ibid., Bk VI, p. 6.

[44]Ibid., Bk XV, p. 19.

As Yen Fu saw it, the power which the despot wielded in China was much greater than merely sovereign power in the modern sense in that every power of the country legally belonged to the despot. Nothing legally belonged to the people. He wrote:

> There is a fundamental difference between the Chinese and the Western political systems. In the West people hold the sovereign power and the power of government is entrusted by the people. ... In our Chinese politics, all powers, no matter how small they are, belong to government. When the rulers exercise powers, they seem to exercise their own inherent powers. ... The people never think that they have the right to question the decisions of the rulers.[45]

Because the emperor held sovereign power, he need not be accountable to his subjects. Yen Fu drew a sharp contrast between democracy in which government was accountable to the people and despotism in which the ruler was not accountable to his subjects. The Western political system even in ancient times had certain elements of democracy. In his letter to Liang Ch'i-chao, Yen Fu suggested that democracy existed in ancient Greece and Rome. `Although the democratic systems then were not perfect, they were nevertheless the initial forms of modern democracy. The seed of democracy in the West was planted in the period as early as our Hsia and Shang period.'[46]

Yen Fu did not discuss the democratic element in Greece and Rome in detail. Nevertheless, he did speak highly of the Greek and Roman election systems. He remarked that in the heyday of the Roman republic, the majority of officials were elected by the people.[47]

Even in the medieval West, Yen Fu still found certain elements of

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[45]CYFW, vol. 4, p. 930.

[46]CYFW, vol. 5, p. 1586. Hsia (2183-1752 B.C.?) and Shang (1751-1112 B.C.) were two earliest dynasties in Chinese history.

[47]CYFW., vol. 4, p. 932.

accountability which the traditional Chinese political system lacked. This accountability, he suggested, was derived from the idea and practice of the inviolability of individual property rights. In his commentary note to Jenks' *A Short History of Politics*, he wrote:

> The foundation of the people's power in European races is much stronger than it is in our race. Even in the dark age of the medieval period when European rulers were extremely tyrannical, the rulers still knew that property was owned by the people. When the ruler wanted to tax people, it was not sufficient for him to pretend to set up officials to serve the people or develop an army to protect the people. He had to ask the consent of the people before taxing them. He therefore had to call together all the people [to get their consent] which was sometimes inconvenient and costly. ... Without their consent, the ruler could not increase taxes and could not get money. If we use the same standard to search our nation's history, and study the prosperous periods recorded in our history, could you find any sages who ever said that the monarch could not levy taxes unless agreed to by the people? We need not mention Han Yu's `On the Way' which asserts that the people should be severely punished if they do not pay taxes.[48]

Based on their tradition of the accountability of the rulers to the people, Yen Fu continued, the modern West gradually developed democratic systems in which `the ruler has to keep his promise to the people and honour his contract with the people. If he fails to do so, the people can hold him responsible.'[49] By contrast, due to the lack of accountability of Chinese rulers, China had not developed any system

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[48]Ibid., p. 927.

[49]Ibid.

equivalent to the parliamentary system in the West either in past or modern times.[50] Nor had China ever developed any system similar to elections as in the West.[51]

Another characteristic of the despotic system in China discussed by Yen Fu was the lack of a universal legal system which bound ruler and ruled alike. The ruler was not subject to any fundamental laws. Yen Fu accepted Montesquieu's conception that `in despotic governments there are no laws; the judge himself is his own rule'.[52] He certainly knew that legal systems had existed in China for thousands of years. He refused, however, to identify traditional Chinese laws with laws in Montesquieu's sense.

> What Montesquieu regards as law is the system of fundamental rules for governing a country. Although such law is not necessarily adopted by consent of the people, it is essential that when such law is enacted, the actions of both rulers and ruled must be subject to its control. If law is only the means of punishing and controlling people; if the monarch is above the law and he can change it at will, if he is not subject to the control of law, then the system, although it has law, will still be a despotic system.[53]

The point Yen Fu tried to make here is similar to some ideas in Karl Wittfogel's controversial work, *Oriental Despotism*. Wittfogel argued that the existence of certain kinds of `written constitutions' in the Orient was by no means identical to the development of a `constitutionally' restricted government.

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[50]In his letter to Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, Yen Fu criticized Liang's remark that China had a parliament in ancient times. Yen said that China had never had any system similar to parliament. (CYFW, vol. 5, p. 1568).

[51]CYFW, vol. 4, p. 928.

[52]Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, Bk VI:3, p. 75.

[53]Yen Fu, *Fa-yi* (A translation of Montesquieu's *The Spirit of the Laws*), vol. 1, p. 26.

> Even a highly systematized law code does not bind the autocratic lawgivers by restrictions other than those inherent in all self-imposed norms. The ruler who exercises complete administrative, judicial, military, and fiscal authority may use this power to make whatever laws he and his aides deem fit.[54]

Moreover, Yen Fu held that there were no institutional checks to the ruler in the traditional Chinese political system. Yen Fu was certainly impressed by Montesquieu's comment to this effect when he translated *The Spirit of the Laws*:

> Here they have no limitations or restrictions, no mediums, terms, equivalents, or remonstrances; no change to propose. Man is a creature that blindly submits to the absolute will of the sovereign.[55]

In his translation of *The Spirit of the Laws*, Yen Fu emphasized this passage because it contained the idea of a despotic system as a system of total power. In this system, the emperor held absolute power over other institutions. No divisions of power in any form and no checks on the power of the despot from any other sources ever existed. By the same token, Yen Fu also appreciated Montesquieu's idea of the division of powers in government. In one of his commentary notes to *The Spirit of the Laws*, Yen Fu wrote, `Montesquieu argues that in a constitutional monarchy there is a division of powers, and in despotism, powers are concentrated in one body. This is a very sound argument.'[56] Yen Fu used the example of China to confirm Montesquieu's argument:

> The weakness of our Chinese system is that from the Son of the

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[54]Karl Wittfogel, *Oriental Despotism: A Comparative Study of Total Power*, New York: Vintage Books, reprint, 1981, p. 101.

[55]Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, Bk III:10, p. 27.

[56]Yen Fu, *Fa-yi* (A translation of Montesquieu's *The Spirit of the Laws*), Bk XXV, p. 13.

> Heaven to the local officials, all combined judicial, legislative and administrative powers in the same body. This is why there is no justice in our criminal cases.[57]

In his essay on Jenks' *A History of Politics*, Yen Fu even regarded the division of powers as one of the criteria of evolution in a political system:

> To evaluate the evolutionary stage of a political system, it is essential to examine the degree of division of powers in the system. In civilized Western countries, political powers are divided into three branches: judicial, legislative and administrative. Parliaments are responsible for initiating and passing laws. Administrators from the monarch to the local level are responsible for implementing those laws. If someone violates laws, the cases are dealt with neither by the legislative power, nor by the executive power, but by the judicial power. When judges carry out their duties, they are not interfered with by legislative or administrative powers....This is the general rule of those civilized countries, Britain in particular. This is why there is no injustice in Britain.... In the Oriental countries, by contrast, not only do the emperors have absolute power, but also officials at every level concentrate in themselves the three powers. Consequently there is no justice in many legal cases.[58]

IV

The causal explanation Yen Fu offered for the despotic system in China was purely cultural. He did not have a materialist approach to history, for instance, resembling Montesquieu's geographical explanation of despotism or Jenks' explanation of legal and political institutions by referring to the forces of production.

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[57]Ibid., Bk VI, p. 10.

[58]CYFW, vol. 1, p. 147.

Despotic ideas in traditional China, for Yen Fu, were by and large responsible for the despotic system. Those ideas falsely legitimated the system, enabling it to exist for a long time.

Yen Fu did not regard all traditional Chinese political ideas as despotic. He distinguished two major traditions in Chinese political thought. First, he perceived classical Confucianism as containing elements comparable to modern Western democratic ideas. Secondly, he regarded the Legalists in the Pre-Ch'in and the main stream of Confucianism after Ch'in as largely oriented towards despotism. Thus his criticism of Chinese despotic ideas was concentrated on the Legalists and on some Neo-Confucians who adopted the Legalist idea of the absolute authority of the emperor. He wrote some highly critical commentary notes to the works of such Legalist theorists in the Pre-Ch'in period as Sheng Pu-hai, Li Ssu, Shang Yang, and Han Fei-tzu.[59] He also chose a dozen Neo-Confucian scholars as the objects of criticism. Among them were Han Yu (768-824 A.D.), Liu Tsung-yuan (773-819 A.D.), Su Shih and Wang An-shih. His criticism of these theorists was focused mainly on their accounts of the origin of government, the relationship between ruler and ruled, and the end of politics.

Yen Fu considered the account of the origin of government important because it related closely to the issue of the sources of political authority. In his essay `In Repudiation of Han Yu' (1895), he attacked vigorously the idea of the origin of government found in Han Yu, a famous T'ang writer. He also wrote some commentary notes to repudiate Liu Tsung-yuan, a T'ang scholar, and Su Shih, a Sung Confucian, for their accounts on the origin of government.

The accounts of the origin of government by Han, Liu and Su bore great similarities. First, they identified the existence of a state of nature before the emergence of civilization and political institutions. In this state, men endured great hardship to survive. Secondly, they all considered the emergence of what they called the sages to be the determining factor of the origins of civilization and political

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[59]Yen Fu,*Fa-yi* (A translation of Montesquieu's *The Spirit of the Laws*), Bk II, pp. 16-7; Yen Fu also wrote some thoughtful commentary notes on Li Ssu's *Tu-tse-shu* (On the enforcement of duties). He denounced Li as `the most extreme advocate of despotism'. (CYFW, vol. 4, p. 1195).

institutions. The crudest expressions of these views is found in Han Yu's essay *Yuan-tao* (The original way). Yen quoted the following passage from Han's essay:

> In ancient times, men suffered acutely. Then the sages appeared to teach them how to live together and sustain themselves. They became their rulers and teachers. They drove away noxious insects, serpents, and wild beasts, and settled the people in the Middle Land. They clothed them when they were cold and fed them when they were hungry. ... They built them dwellings and trained artisans to supply them with tools, merchants to exchange their goods, doctors to prevent their early death. They established rites of mourning, burial, and sacrifice to nurture their feelings of love, and ceremonies to teach them the proper precedence of social relations. They created music for them to express their feelings. They established government for them to overcome their laziness. They set up legal systems for them to remove violence. They invented weights and measures for them to prevent cheating with each other. They built cities and armies to prevent invasion.... had it not been for the sages, the human race would long since have perished.[60]

In a similar manner, Liu Tsung-yuan traced the origin of government to a state of nature in ancient times. `In ancient times', wrote Liu in his essay *Feng-chien-lun* (On feudalism), `thousands of things grew. The world was full of thistles and thorns, as well as wild animals. Men could not fight them for they did not have fur and claws to defend themselves. ... Men had to use material tools to feed themselves and defend themselves. There would be fights among men for material goods. To stop the fights, there had to be someone who had the authority to judge. Some wise man, whom many people liked to trust, would tell the people what was right and what was wrong, and used punishment to prevent wrong doing. This was the origin of the monarch and

[60]Han Yu, *Han Yu chi* (Collected works of Han Yu), ed. Tung T'i-te, Peking: jen-min wen-hsueh, 1980, pp. 217-8; Yen Fu quoted in CYFW, vol. 1, pp. 32-3.

law.[61]

Su Shih's account of the origin of government also supposed the existence of a primitive stage before the emergence of political authority. In the primitive stage of mankind, there was no distinction between nobles and commoners. People did not know how to plant and weave. Then the sages rose to become monarch or officials. They taught the people to plant and weave, and to establish social and legal systems.[62]

Yen Fu's criticisms of these Chinese thinkers' accounts of the origin of government focused primarily on the empirical dimension. Based on his knowledge of nineteenth century Western evolutionary theories, Yen Fu simply dismissed their accounts as historically inaccurate. He argued that political authority was the result of a natural evolutionary process rather than the conscious choice of men.[63] The origin of political authority could be traced to the emergence of the family, which was the earliest form of group life among human beings.[64] After a stage of communal marriage, a system of monogamy developed.[65] From monogamy there arose a patriarchal political system. From the patriarchal system issued the modern state. During the development from the family to the modern state, Yen Fu further pointed out, the division of labour in society increased.[66] In society as a social organism, different parts performed different functions. Government arose to organize these different parts of society as a kind of community rather than simply as a gathering of individuals.[67] Government functioned as the central part of a society just as the head is the central part of human body.[68] As society evolved from a lower stage to a higher

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[61]Yen Fu quoted, CYFW, vol.4, p. 1180.

[62]Yen Fu quoted, CYFW., vol. 4, p. 1184.

[63]CYFW, vol. 5, p. 1252.

[64]Ibid., vol. 2, p. 310.

[65]Ibid., pp. 310-311.

[66]Ibid., p. 314.

[67]Ibid., vol. 5, p. 1256.

[68]Ibid.

stage, the division of labour within government developed. Different institutions and officials were established in government, and meanwhile, governmental institutions were established from central to local levels.[69] Yen Fu quoted a paragraph from the *I Ching* to describe the whole process of social and governmental evolution: `Due to the distinction between male and female, the relation of husband and wife emerged; following the relation of husband and wife, the relation of father and son appeared; following the relation of father and son, kings and officials emerged. Then a distinction between nobles and commoners appeared and consequently morality and propriety emerged.'[70]

In the same way that Yen Fu dismissed the accounts of the origin of government by these Chinese thinkers, he also rebuked the theories of social contract found in modern Western political theories. He traced the origin of the idea of the social contract to Greek and Roman philosophy.[71] He argued that this idea did not develop into a systematic theory until modern times with Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau as the main advocates. In *Leviathan*, Yen Fu wrote, Hobbes portrayed the state of nature as a state of war in which everyone fought against each other. In order to escape from this state, people made a contract among themselves, agreeing to hand their rights over to a third party, usually a monarch, in order to maintain social order.[72] Locke's theory, as Yen Fu saw it, differed from Hobbes' in that Locke described the state of nature as peaceful and free. Nevertheless, according to Locke, there were many inconveniences in the state of nature. Therefore, people agreed to establish a government and to hand over some of their powers to the government.[73] Yen stated that following Hobbes and Locke, Rousseau developed a similar, yet more radical theory of the social contract. Rousseau reduced all political authority to the

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[69]Ibid., p. 1256.

[70]Ibid., vol. 2, p. 310.

[71]Ibid., p. 334.

[72]Ibid.

[73]Ibid., p. 335.

acquiescence of the people and based on this a theory of popular sovereignty.[74]

Yen Fu suggested that the social contract theories of Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau resembled those of Han Yu, Liu Tsun-yuan, and Su Shih insofar as their accounts were not in accordance with historical reality.[75] 'They were not aware that a patriarchal society preceded the modern state as Edward Jenks thoroughly discussed.'[76]

Despite his comparison of modern Western theories of social contract with accounts of the origin of government of several Chinese thinkers, Yen Fu's main targets of criticism were the theories of the Chinese scholars rather than those of the Western thinkers. He felt that the accounts of Han Yu, Liu Tsung-yuan, and Su Shih of the role of the sages and common people in the origin of government were unacceptable. The argument that a primitive period of human history preceded the emergence of government in these Chinese thinkers was not very different from the 'natural state' which Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau postulated. The difference was that modern Western thinkers attributed the origin of government to a kind of social contract among equals, while Chinese thinkers described the origin of government as a process of salvation and education of the common people by the sages. Hobbes, for example, asserted that men by nature are equal. 'Nature hath made men so equal, in the faculties of the body, and minds.'[77] By contrast, the accounts of the Chinese scholars aggrandized the ability of the sages. The sages were endowed with super-human properties which enabled them to play divine roles in helping ordinary men. Therefore they were entitled to enjoy a prominent position as guardians of society. Ordinary people were described as not only lacking any capacity in social and political affairs, but also lacking the ability of self-protection and self-realization. Their lives and interests could only be protected and served by the sages. In return,

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[74]Ibid., p. 339.

[75]Ibid., vol. 5, p. 1261.

[76]Ibid.

[77]Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. C. B. Macpherson, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968, Chap. 13, p. 98; Yen Fu's discussion of Hobbes' idea is found in CYFW, vol. 2, p. 334.

they served the sages with total submission and obedience. Yen Fu was offended by these accounts of the sages as `superhuman'.[78] He ridiculed Han Yu angrily: if the people could not survive without sages because they did not have wings, fur, scales and fins to protect themselves against the heat and cold, and they did not have claws and fangs with which to procure their food, did the sages come equipped with fur or claws and fangs? Did they not suffer from cold and illness and all the vicissitudes of other mortals? If they were human like all the others, where did they acquire their peculiar wisdom? If mankind had to wait for the sages to teach them the barest rudiments of living, would they not have perished long before the sages arrived?[79]

When Yen Fu criticized the accounts of the origin of government by Han Yu, Liu Tsung-yuan, and Su Shih, his main purpose was to repudiate their conclusions. This was particularly true of his repudiation of Han Yu. A forbearer of Neo-Confucianism, Han Yu followed Confucian tradition in its moral aspects, but departed from classical Confucianism in his political philosophy. Han completely lacked any conception of the role of the people in politics. Instead he embraced the theory of the absolute authority of the emperor found mainly in Legalism.[80] Based on his fictitious account of the origin of government, Han Yu developed a theory of the relationship between rulers and the ruled. As their ruling positions were derived originally from their enabling people to escape the state of nature, the rulers were entitled to demand obedience from the people.

> The emperor is the one who gives orders. The officials are those who carry out these orders. The people are those who produce grain and cloth, make tools and do business in the market in order to serve the emperor. If the emperor does not give orders, he fails to perform his duty. If officials do not carry out the orders of the emperor, they fail to

[78]CYFW, vol. 1, p. 33.

[79]Ibid., the English translation is from Schwartz, p. 65.

[80]CYFW, vol. 2, p. 434.

perform their duties. If the people do not produce grain, cloth and tools to serve the emperor, they fail to perform their duties and therefore should be severely punished.[81]

Han Yu's idea of the absolute authority of the emperor offended Yen Fu. Yen angrily accused Han as `only recognizing the existence of one person [the emperor] and ignoring the existence of millions of people'.[82] If Han's theory was accepted, Yen asked, `how do tyrannical rulers such as Chien, Tsou and Ch'in differ from virtuous rulers like Yao and Shun?'[83]

Related to the idea of the absolute authority of the despot was one which treated the despot, rather than the people, as the end of politics. The most blunt statement in this regard which Yen Fu chose to repudiate was the famous remark of Li Ssu (280-208 B.C.), a Legalist minister in the Ch'in dynasty. The Second Emperor of the Ch'in once asked Li Ssu: `I want to give uninhibited expression to my will and indulge my desires to the broadest extent. I hope long to enjoy the fruits of empire, and to suffer no harm. Why should I not do this?' In his reply, `On the Enforcement of Duties', Li put forward the clearest and most extreme statement on the theory of despotism in all of the two thousand years of Chinese imperial history:

To possess the empire, and yet not throw off all restraints, is called making shackles for oneself of the empire. There is no reason for that to happen other than [a ruler's] failure to supervise [his underlings] and hold them responsible; when however his responsibilities must extend to belabouring his own body in service to the people of his empire in the manner of [the Sage Kings] Yao and Yu, [the empire] indeed is to be called his shackles.[84]

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[81]Han Yu, *Han Yu chi* (Collected works of Han Yu), pp. 217-8; Yen Fu quoted in CYFW, vol. 1, p. 33.

[82]CYFW, vol. 1, p. 33.

[83]Ibid.

[84]Quoted in Hsiao Kung-ch'uan, *A History of Chinese Political Thought*, vol. 1,

The essence of Li Ssu's argument was that the empire was the property of the emperor. Therefore, the emperor should `devote himself solely to using the empire for his own interests'. He should not `belabour his body and weary his spirit by his personal services to the common people'.[85]

In China's history, there was no shortage of theories arguing for the absolute authority of the emperor. There were, however, not many scholars or politicians who expressed as crudely as did Li Ssu the point that the whole purpose of politics was to serve the emperor rather than the people. It was not surprising then that Yen Fu chose Li's remarks as the target of his criticism. In his commentary note to Li's `On the Enforcement of Duties', Yen denounced Li's remarks as `the most extreme idea of despotism'.[86] He compared Li's idea with those of Machiavelli and Nietzsche in the sense that they `praised tyrannical authorities and emphasized the enforcement of the ruler's orders'.[87]

V

In criticizing the despotic ideas of Legalists and some Neo-Confucians as well as the traditional Chinese despotic political system, Yen Fu retrieved certain elements from classical Confucianism. The most obvious example was his use of Mencius' idea of `the primacy of the people'.

Yen Fu thought that two elements in Mencius' doctrine of `the primacy of the people' were comparable with modern Western democratic ideas: the idea of popular sovereignty and the idea of the people as the end of politics. By repudiating Han Yu's `The Original Way', Yen Fu reiterated Mencius' statement that `the people are of supreme importance; the alters to the gods of earth and grain come next; last comes

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trans. F. W. Mote, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979, p. 439.

[85]Ibid.

[86]CYFW, vol. 5, p. 1195.

[87]Ibid., p. 1196.

the ruler."[88] He suggested that Mencius' account of the relationship between ruler and ruled was the best expression of popular sovereignty ever found in history in either China or the West.[89] To some extent, he found it comparable with the theories of popular sovereignty found in Locke and Rousseau.[90] Although Yen Fu criticized the theories of social contract of Locke and Rousseau as ahistorical, he nevertheless honoured the doctrine of popular sovereignty as being drawn from such theories. He praised Rousseau's theory of government for containing several basic principles of modern democracy such as separating sovereign from administrative power, insisting that sovereign power belonged to the people, and conceiving the government as an executive body designed to carry out the will of the sovereign power.[91]

Yen Fu also suggested that Mencius' idea of the primacy of the people implied that the people should be treated as the end of politics in sharp contrast with the Legalist conception of the emperor as the end of politics. Following Mencius, Yen Fu used the division of labour to argue for the intrinsic worthiness of the people over the ruler. He stated that a society could not function unless the people were engaged in different kinds of work. Like a farmer or craftsman, the emperor's function was to serve the people.[92] In this sense, the position of emperor did not have any special sacredness. It was only one of the jobs in society's division of labour. The end of politics was to serve the welfare of the people and most importantly to protect lives and properties.[93]

In restating Mencius' idea of popular sovereignty, Yen Fu followed some scholars of the late Ming and early Ch'ing period. In fact there was a striking

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[88]Ibid., vol. 1, p. 33.

[89]Ibid., vol. 2, p. 241.

[90]Ibid.

[91]Ibid.

[92]For Mencius' discussions of the people as the end of politics based on his idea of the division of labour, see *Mencius*, (trans. D.C. Lau, p. 42); for Yen Fu's discussions, see CYFW, vol. 1, pp. 32-6.

[93]CYFW, vol. 1, p. 35.

similarity between Yen Fu's `Repudiation of Han Yu' and Huang Tsung-hsi's *Ming-i tai-fang Lu* (A plan for the prince). Both Huang and Yen criticized the traditional despotic system for the absolute authority of the despot. Both reasserted Mencius' ideas of popular sovereignty and the people as the end of politics.[94]

Yen Fu, however, went further than either Mencius or the liberal thinkers of the late Ming and early Ch'ing period. While praising Mencius' idea of popular sovereignty, Yen Fu stopped short of identifying Mencius' ideas with modern democratic ideas in the West. He considered the main difference to be their treatments of the people's actual role in politics. Although Mencius emphasized the importance of the people and urged the rulers to treat the people's welfare as the end of government, he never had any notion that the people should play an actual role in political affairs. Moreover, he never thought that the powers of the rulers should be checked or limited. He never mentioned that the rulers should be accountable to their subjects. Yen Fu wrote: `There is a fundamental difference between Chinese and Western political ideas. The Western thinkers believe that the rulers should be elected by the ruled. This idea was completely absent from the minds of any of our ancient sages.'[95] Without institutions such as elections, the idea of popular sovereignty in Confucianism could only serve as a moral check to rulers. It could at best nurture some benevolent rulers, rather than establish a system in which no ruler could seize despotic power.[96]

This was why Yen Fu claimed that the Confucian ideal of popular sovereignty was never realized in the history of China. Yen Fu argued that the golden ages of the three emperors in the ancient times praised by Confucians had not existed.[97] All of the four thousand years of political development in China could only be described as

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[94]Huang Tsung-hsi, *Ming-i tai-fang Lu*, (A plan for the prince), esp. Chapter 1, `On the Origin of the Prince'.

[95]CYFW, vol. 4, p. 932.

[96]Yen Fu, *Fa-yi* (A translation of Montesquieu's *The Spirit of the Laws*), Bk III, p. 17.

[97]Ibid, p. 9.

`circles of order and disorder'.[98] If there happened to be a benevolent ruler, there was peace and prosperity for a certain time. Many rulers, however, were tyrannical and corrupt. The system contained nothing to prevent them from gaining power.

By raising the issue of the ordinary people's role in politics, Yen Fu touched upon a key issue in modern democratic theory: the issue of citizenship and participation. The idea of citizenship, as Dennis F. Thompson sees it, is closely related with the idea of participation. Thompson distinguishes between two different concepts: `responsiveness' and `participation'. `To say that a system is democratic is to imply not only that the system is responsive to the interests of most of the citizens but also that the citizens share in governing (if only by selecting in a competitive system who shall govern between elections).'[99]

By Thompson's definition, Mencius' idea of popular sovereignty can be justifiably called `responsive', but not `participatory'. The people in Mencius' theory are still `subjects' of the ruler rather than `citizens', no matter how benevolent the ruler is. The idea of the citizen is essential to any democratic system. From the ancient Greek city-state to modern democracy in the nation-state, `what citizenship entitled a man to was *membership*; that is, some minimum share of political activity or participation in public business.'[100]

Yen Fu's criticism of Mencius' idea of popular sovereignty as lacking any notion of participation represented a significant departure from traditional Chinese political beliefs. He not only regarded the people as the sovereign power of a nation, as Mencius had, but also granted people certain rights of participation. He recognized the people's actual role in political affairs to be essential to a modern political system.

Nevertheless, on this issue of participation, Yen Fu did not go so far as to identify with any major school of modern Western democratic theories. His position was somewhere between Mencius' idea of the primacy of the people and what has

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[98]Ibid., BK VIII, p. 28.

[99]Dennis F. Thompson, *The Democratic Citizen*, Cambridge University Press, 1970, pp. 2-3.

[100]George H. Sabine, *A History of Political Theory*, third edition, London: George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd., 1963, p. 5.

been generally understood as democratic theory. In his accounts of the relationship between the ruler and the ruled, there were strong elements of elitism. Yen accepted in principle that the people were the sovereigns of a country, and accepted the possibility that in the future people could govern themselves directly without a monarch. However, for a country like China, the people were not yet ready to govern themselves. They had to accept a monarch as a necessary evil, though they should choose, if possible, a virtuous man as their monarch. There should be an agreement between the people and the monarch and the people should tell the monarch:

> We are busy working on agriculture, textiles, industry and commerce. If we defend our life and property by ourselves, our work will be jeopardized. We therefore choose you to concentrate on undertaking the task of protection for us. We will offer some part of our earnings in agriculture, textiles, industry and commerce to you so that both you and we can benefit.[101]

The monarch must say to the people:

> I, as a humble person, am entrusted with the leadership of the people. This is because the people are not yet able to govern themselves. The reason for their inability of self-rule is that their moral, intellectual and physical capacities are not high enough. I will work hard to promote the advance of the people's moral, intellectual and physical capacities...until the people will not cheat and harm each other. When the people reach the level of self-rule, I will return all powers to them.[102]

In this agreement, according to Yen Fu, the people were the sovereign part.

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[101]CYFW, vol. 1, p. 34.

[102]Ibid., p. 35.

`Without the people paying taxes, there would be no monarch at all.'[103] The monarch was a kind of trustee. He and his officials must perform their duties vigorously. `If the monarch fails to prevent violence and harm in a society, he should be removed. If officials fail to carry out the orders of the monarch to prevent violence and harm, they should be punished.'[104]

Yen Fu's ideas of democracy are reminiscent of Schumpeter's elitist idea of democracy. The people's role in politics is not to participate in decision-making since common people are not competent enough to make decisions on political issues which require special knowledge. The main role for the common people in democratic politics is to choose leadership through elections and entrust the leadership to make political decisions.[105]

Elitist though it was, Yen Fu's idea of democracy was a major break with Chinese political tradition in several senses. First, the relation between ruler and the ruled changed significantly. The ruler was treated as the people's `trustee'. He had to be `chosen' by the people. Secondly, there was an agreement between the people and monarch to spell out clearly what the monarch's duties would be. Thirdly, if the monarch failed to perform his duties as the people commanded, he would be punished. Finally, the position of monarchy would be temporary and would be abolished once the people could establish self-rule. All these indicated that the status of the people began the transition from subjects of the ruler to citizens in the modern sense.

VI

Why was democracy more desirable than other forms of government? Why should China change its age-old political system by adopting parliamentary and constitutional forms from the West? In short, what was the theoretical basis of Yen

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[103]Ibid., p. 33.

[104]Ibid.

[105]See Joseph A Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, New York: Harper Torchbooks, reprint, 1975, pp. 269-83.

Fu's justification of democracy and criticism of despotism? The answer offered by Schwartz was that Yen Fu justified democracy on social Darwinist grounds. By social Darwinist grounds, Schwartz meant that Yen Fu regarded democracy as having the instrumental value of nurturing the individuals' sense of nationalism and willingness to sacrifice for the sake of the state.[106]

Schwartz's interpretation is misleading in two respects. On the one hand, he misinterpreted Yen Fu's utilitarian argument as social Darwinist. On the other hand, he failed to observe some important arguments which went beyond immediate considerations of the wealth and power of the Chinese state.

To be sure, Yen Fu by and large did not perceive democracy itself as having an intrinsic value. His argument for democracy was instrumental and external. This instrumental argument, however, had little to do with social Darwinism, and it was essentially a utilitarian argument. As Alan Ryan sees it, there are two different democratic theories in terms of their arguments for democracy. One is a `rights-based theory of democracy', and the other is a utilitarian argument for democracy. `A rights-based theory of democracy must be concerned above all else with questions of legitimacy and authority rather than with consequentialist questions. That is, a defense of democratic institutions in terms of rights must claim that a democratic government is uniquely legitimate rather than that a democratic government is more likely than any kind of government to maximize utility.'[107] The utilitarian argument for democracy, by contrast, is essentially an external argument because there is no attempt to give democracy an intrinsic value. Democracy is justified by its instrumental value in maximizing utility.[108]

By Ryan's standards, Yen Fu's argument for democracy was basically utilitarian in the sense that he appraised democracy mainly by its instrumental value, rather than its intrinsic value. His basic argument was that democracy, more than any

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[106]Benjamin Schwartz, *In Search of Wealth and Power*, pp. 66-9.

[107]Alan Ryan, `Mill and Rousseau: Utility and Rights', in *Democratic Theory and Practice*, ed. by Graeme Duncan, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, p. 42.

[108]Ibid.

other form of government, could promote the development of certain moral and intellectual properties of individuals which were essential for the development of the society.

One should bear in mind that Yen's discussion of democracy was only one part of his general analysis of the differences between China and the West and his overall solution for China's crises. As discussed above, based on Spencer's theory of social organism and some Confucian ideas Yen perceived the principal difference between China and the West, and thereby China's fundamental weakness to lie in the levels of the individuals' moral, intellectual and physical development. Small wonder that his main criterion for judging a political system would be its impact on individuals' moral and intellectual development.

Moreover, Yen Fu's association of democracy and the development of the people's moral and intellectual capacities could be partially attributed to his reading of such Western works as Montesquieu's *The Spirit of the Laws*, Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*, and John Stuart Mill's *Considerations on Representative Government*. These works, in different ways, expressed deep concern for the improvement of mankind morally and intellectually, and linked the social, legal and political systems with what Montesquieu called `the general spirit, the morals, and customs of a nation'.[109] Montesquieu claimed that laws are the most important factors in shaping the character of a nation.[110] Tocqueville considered the greatest advantage of democracy to be its educational function for the people. He held that democracy, more than any other form of government, could nurture a habit of involvement in public affairs, teach the notion of political rights, instill the rule of law, and draw men into a concern for social problems and responsibilities.[111] Mill's most formidable defence of democracy was that it provided the opportunity to improve mankind. For Mill, `the most important point of excellence which any form of government can

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[109]Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, Bk XIX (title), p. 292.

[110]Ibid., Bk XIX:27, p. 307.

[111]Jack Lively, *The Social and Political Thought of Alexis de Tocqueville*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962, p. 110.

possess is to promote the virtue and intelligence of the people themselves.'[112] Democratic government, more than any other form of government, could foster the development of a vigorous, public-spirited `national character'.[113]

Yen Fu did not acknowledge his debt to Western thinkers for the idea of the educational function of democracy. Nevertheless, certain intellectual links are evident in his writings. First, he held that democracy, more than any other form of government, could nurture the `public spirit' (*kung-hsin*) of the people. He argued that men by nature were self-interested. Without participation in public affairs, men's concerns could only be limited to their private interests. `The best governance of the sages lies in the fact that they can channel men's self-considerations into public-considerations.'[114] The best way to do so was to let people participate in public affairs through democratic processes. Yen Fu claimed that Western democratic political systems `had successfully channelled people's self-considerations into public-considerations'.[115] In the West, people held the sovereign power of the country. They elected parliament, which passed laws. They elected executive officials to carry out the laws. Therefore, in the West, people had strong sentiments of public spirit. They had a strong sense of the rule of law as well as of political obligation. They obeyed government not because they thought themselves inferior to their rulers, but because the government was elected by themselves.[116] Moreover, Western people regarded national affairs as their own affairs. `When people are asked to perform public duties,

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[112]J. S. Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government*, p. 207.

[113]`National character' is defined by Mill as including: 1) a sense of citizenship; 2) a broadness of `conceptions' and `sentiments', which extend citizens' thoughts and feelings beyond the `satisfaction of daily wants'; and 3) an understanding of the general interest and stimulation of public-regarding attitudes. (Dennis F. Thompson, *John Stuart Mill and Representative Government*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976, pp. 37-8.)

[114]CYFW, vol. 1, p. 31.

[115]Ibid., p. 2.

[116]Ibid., p. 31.

they regard it as the same as working on their own land or house.'[117] This was particularly true with tax-collection. Because people participated in political decision-making, they were willing to pay high taxes if they felt it was needed. `The taxes paid by people are agreed upon by the people and in its last result, collected by the people. There is therefore no dissatisfaction among the people even if taxes are very heavy.'[118]

`Public spirit' for Yen Fu was often related to the sentiment of patriotism. Yen's position on patriotism was not always consistent. As we have shown before, he explicitly criticized nationalism as well as patriotism. On some other occasions, however, he openly praised patriotism. On balance, it seems that he was in opposition to nationalism as manifest in any kind of anti-foreign sentiment. Yet he preferred that people love their countries. He regarded democracy as the best means of nurturing patriotism in the people. In the same way that Tocqueville was impressed by American patriotism, Yen Fu was impressed by the general level of patriotic feeling in the West.[119] `When I heard the British talk about Britain, the French talk about France, or citizens of other countries talk about their motherland, I found that they mentioned their countries with the same feelings as we mentioned our parents. They seemed to have a deep and inexhaustible love for their countries.'[120]

While the greatest advantage of democracy was its promotion of public spirit and sentiments of patriotism among the people, the most intolerable evil of despotism, for Yen Fu, was its damage to people's morality and public spirit. He presented several different yet related arguments. First, he argued that despotic rulers would try hard to fool the people. The despotic rulers of China since the Ch'in dynasty, he wrote, were in fact the biggest thieves who had stolen sovereign power from the people.

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[117]Ibid.

[118]Ibid., vol. 4, p. 975.

[119]In his *Democracy in America*, Tocqueville described democracy as nurturing very strong patriotic sentiments among the American people. This patriotism `is engendered by enlightenment, grows by aid of laws and the exercise of rights, and in the end becomes, in a sense, mingled with personal interest.' (p. 235.)

[120]CYFW, vol. 1, p. 31.

> Since they steal sovereign power, they have been consistently worried that the people would find it one day. They therefore set up numerous rules and laws. The essence of those rules and laws was to destroy the moral, intellectual and physical capacities of the people. The rulers know that the people are the sovereign of the nation. They realize that only by making people passive and foolish, by preventing people from becoming enlightened, and by keeping people unable to fight for their own interests, can they keep the stolen sovereign power for good.[121]

Secondly, under despotic government the status of the people were no different from that of slaves. In this condition, they could not be expected to develop public spirit and patriotic sentiments. `Since the rulers treat people as their slaves, people also treat themselves as slaves. Slaves obey or respect their masters because they are forced to do so, rather than voluntarily. In their hearts, slaves do not love their rulers nor appreciate their relation with the rulers.'[122] By the same token, people under despotic rule did not share any sense of responsibility for the destiny of their country.

To be sure, Yen Fu did not deny that there were rulers in Chinese history who, following classical Confucian teachings, cared for the welfare of the people and responded to their needs. Such rulers treated people not as slaves, but as children. Nevertheless, in cultivating the people's public spirit, he remarked, they fared no better than tyrannical rulers. Even under such paternalistic rulers, the people still had no voice in public affairs. They were still subjects of the ruler, rather than citizens of a country. Since the Ch'in dynasty, he wrote, ordinary people had been prohibited from discussing legal and political affairs. Before the Sung and Yuan dynasties, however, the gentry could comment on political affairs, a practice finally banned in the Ming dynasty. The Ch'ing dynasty was worse still in that it even banned academic activities which related to current affairs. `People's mouths are tightly controlled.

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[121]Ibid., vol. 1, pp. 35-6.

[122]Ibid., p. 31.

Discussions of political affairs are regarded as illegal and vicious.' This was why, Yen stated, the people's intellectual and moral capacities were continually declining.[123]

Why should the virtue of public spirit and patriotism be cultivated? Yen Fu presented two different arguments. On the one hand, he regarded these virtues as necessary for China's survival and development in the face of international competition. On the other hand, the virtues were essential to achieving a harmonious society. Yen Fu was consistently concerned for China's survival in the face of serious national crises. The educational functions of democracy were more closely related to nationalism than for Western thinkers such as Montesquieu, Tocqueville and Mill. The patriotic sentiments of people in the West, according to Yen Fu, explained the strength of their nations. `When people are required to fight against national enemies, they regard it as no different from defending their own family.' They loved their countries because they regarded the countries as their own property.[124] `In a truly democratic country, ...when people fight for their country, they in fact fight for themselves. They fight to protect their own property and fight against their own enemies.' This explained why people in Western democratic countries would fight to the death to defend their countries.[125]

This phenomenon, as Yen Fu saw it, confirmed the traditional Confucian doctrine of the importance of winning the people's hearts. In his memorandum to the Ch'ing emperor in 1898, he urged the emperor to open some channels immediately for the people's participation in politics in order to win the people's hearts. He quoted Mencius' famous remark that `Heaven's favourable weather is less important that Earth's advantageous terrain, and Earth's advantageous terrain is less important than human unity.'[126] He quoted from Chia Yi (200-168 A.D), a Han Confucian, that only by winning the hearts of the people, could the empire be secured. He also quoted Su Shih (1036-1101) that `it is the fundamental principle of governance to win the

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[123]Ibid., vol. 4, p. 907.

[124]Ibid., vol. 1, p. 31.

[125]Ibid., p. 73.

[126]Ibid., vol. 1, p. 72; *Mencius*, trans. D. C. Lau, p. 85.

people's hearts'. Asserting that `no country will be in danger where the ruler does not lose the people's hearts', he indicated politely yet unmistakably that the internal and external crisis China faced at the time could be partially explained by the ruler's loss of the people's hearts. The reasons for this, he suggested, were the existence of a great gap between the ruler and the people and the lack of communication between them.[127]

To win popular support was important for Yen Fu because a society needed a strong `point of solidarity' (*chih-tien*). Yen Fu's concept of a `point of solidarity' apparently stemmed from Walter Bagehot's similar idea in his *Physics and Politics* which Yen claimed to have read.[128] Yen explained this concept as follows:

> According to physical principles, certain materials are solid and hard to break. The reason is that these materials have strong points of solidarity and a powerful force of gravitation. Just as a magnet attracts iron, the point of solidarity, through its force of gravitation, attracts other elements of this material and forms an entity with other elements. The point of solidarity and other elements exist by mutual attraction and they therefore can resist the invasion of external forces and maintain their existence.[129]

While Yen used examples from natural science, his language was clearly metaphorical. What he meant was that a nation, as an entity, must have a point of solidarity. This was the belief shared by the people that the country was their common property (*kung-chan*). Yen maintained that the point of solidarity of China had lost its force of attraction. The rulers had lost the peoples' hearts and the people did not identify themselves as members of the nation. `The people as members of the community do not know what attraction this community has; the soldiers join the

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[127]CYFW, vol. 1, p. 72.

[128]Yen mentioned once that he read and even translated some parts of Bagehot's book. (CYFW, vol. 5, p. 1346) Nevertheless, no evidence corroborates his claim that he translated Bagehot's book.

[129]CYFW, vol. 1, p. 74.

armies without knowing for whom they fight.'[130]

In a letter to a friend, Yen Fu expressed his idea of `the point of solidarity' even more clearly:

> After two thousand years of rule in which the rulers are honoured and the people are undignified, the peoples' consciousness has been suppressed. ...People's sympathetic feelings and patriotic sentiments have been eliminated completely.... Therefore, today's China is just like a piece of meat. When a piece of meat is attached to a body, it is alive and it has many strong points of solidarity which have a force of attraction for every cell. Now this piece of meat has become rotten. It has no point of solidarity to attract cells. If this rotten meat confronts foreign forces which are just like sharp knives, how can this meat not be cut into mince.[131]

Yen Fu also related `solidarity' in society with an age-old Confucian ideal: harmony in society. Traditional Chinese philosophy, and Confucianism in particular, perceived society to be a harmonious unity. According to Confucianism, society consisted of a large number of small social units (the family, the village, the guild, etc.). `The welfare of the social organism as a whole depends upon harmonious co-operation among all of its units and of the individuals who comprise these units.'[132] Every individual in society had certain obligations to perform. The ruler should rule benevolently, his ministers should be loyal yet at the same time ready to offer their frank criticism; farmers should produce the maximum amount of products. `In other words, society should be like a magnified family, the members of which, though

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[130]Ibid.

[131]Ibid., vol. 3, p. 521.

[132]Derk Bodde, `Harmony and Conflict in Chinese Philosophy', in *Studies in Chinese Thought*, ed. Arthur F. Wright, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953, p. 46.

differing in their status and functions, all work in harmony for the common good.'[133]

Because of this characteristic of Confucian thought, H. G. Greel saw Confucianism as having elements of cooperative democracy. Greel called Confucius `a forerunner of democracy'. `He had an appreciation of some of the basic principles underlying successful cooperation between men that has seldom been surpassed, and not frequently equalled, by other philosophers. He did not merely approve of the cooperative state; he was passionately devoted to its realization.'[134]

While Greel's claim of Confucianism as democratic may be disputed, his observation that Confucianism encouraged cooperation is nevertheless very insightful. Moreover, his idea of relating the Confucian conception of cooperation and the modern concept of democracy is not as awkward as it seems. In modern China, the ideal of a cooperative and harmonious society inspired many Chinese to embrace Western ideas of democracy. Before Yen Fu, some reform-minded scholars of the late nineteenth century, such as Cheng Kuan-ying, Wang T'ao, Ho Kai, Ch'en Chih and T'ang Chen, had praised Western democratic systems for promoting harmony between the ruler and the ruled as well as between different social groups. Cheng Kuan-ying, the first person in modern China to propose the establishment of a constitutional monarchy, argued that the establishment of a parliament would promote harmony between the ruler and the ruled.[135] Wang T'ao praised the British parliamentary system and claimed that `the real strength of England lies in the fact that there is a sympathetic understanding between the governing and the governed, a close relationship between the ruler and the people.'[136] Ho K'ai highly recommended the British parliamentary system believing that this system in fact would restore an idealized Chinese past. He and his contemporary reformers, such as Ch'en Chih, T'ang

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[133]Ibid., p. 47.

[134]H. G. Creel, *Confucius and the Chinese Way*, New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1960 (first edition 1949), p. 288.

[135]Hsiung Yuen-tzu, *Chung-kuo chin-tai min-chu ssu-hsiang shih* (A history of democratic thought in modern China), p. 122.

[136]Paul A. Cohen, *Between Tradition and Modernity: Wang T'ao and Reform in Late Ch'ing China*, p. 225.

Chen and Ch'en Ch'iu all claimed that `parliamentary institutions would enable China to realize the classical ideals of social and political harmony by causing..."emperor and people to be as one body", and "superior and inferior to be of one mind".'[137]

It is interesting to note that Yen Fu's reformist predecessors in the Late Ch'ing all correlated some sort of democratic reform with `returning to the classics.' As Ho K'ai said clearly, `only if we can return to the past [*fu-ku*] can we accomplish what the times require of us.'[138] To be sure, this returning to the past did not simply mean the rediscovery of classical Confucianism. Under the name of the Chinese past, Western democratic institutions were recommended. However, those institutions were adopted largely as a means of actualizing traditional Confucian conceptions of the ideal polity.

Unlike his predecessors, Yen Fu did not claim to return to the classics in advocating democratic reform. He was more Westernized than his predecessors. His democratic ideas, including his justification of democratic reform, bore obvious influences from Western thinkers as discussed above. Nevertheless, like his predecessors, the traditional ideal of a harmonious and cooperative society strongly motivated him to embrace democratic values. The most impressive success of democracy in the West, for him, was that `the gap between the rulers and the ruled is very narrow.' `The monarch and the people...are just like members of one family.' They were equal in the sense that they all shared the powers and responsibilities of the country. `When the country faces problems, they will worry together. When the country has difficulties, they will fight to overcome them together.' Yen Fu saw the realization of the Confucian ideal of a harmonious society in the Western democracies.[139]

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[137]Lloyd E. Eastman, `Political Reformism in China before the Sino-Japanese War' in *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. xxvii (Aug., 1968), p. 705. Eastman, however, overlooked the influences of the traditional Confucian ideas on those thinkers when he stated that `these appeals to tradition as a sanction for the adoption of a parliamentary system were, of course, specious'. (ibid.)

[138]Jung-fang Tsai, *Comprador Ideologist in Modern China: Ho K'ai (Ho Ch'i, 1859-1914) and Hu Li-yuan (1847-1916)*, Ph.D thesis of University of Californian, Los Angles, 1975, p. 55.

[139]CYFW, vol. 1, p. 11.

Yen Fu's understanding of the merits of Western democracy contrasts sharply with interpretations of democracy by Western thinkers. Modern Western ideas and the practice of democracy can be regarded as what Jane J. Mansbridge calls `adversary democracy'.[140] As Mansbridge sees it, the main stream of modern Western liberal and democratic thinkers, such as Hobbes, Locke, the British utilitarians, and the American founding fathers all legitimate self-interest as the cornerstone of political life, and regard democracy as a mechanism for representing conflicting self-interest `rather than trying to reconcile them or make them subordinate to a larger common good'.[141] This view of adversary democracy is best represented by contemporary pluralist theories of democracy which perceive democracy to be a mechanism of competition between different interests in society. For the pluralist, political decisions in Western democracies are reached, and should be reached, as a result of numerous groups exerting pressure at different levels of the system.[142]

This difference between Yen Fu's understanding of democracy and that of many Western scholars has some theoretical implications. First, it indicates that Yen Fu's conceptions of democracy as well as citizenship lacks certain elements fundamental to modern Western liberal democracy. Yen's idea of democracy was much closer to ancient Greek democratic ideas than to modern democratic ideas. As Thompson suggests, there are distinctions between the Greek idea of citizenship and the modern liberal-democratic idea of citizenship. `Modern citizenship suggests that citizens are in their political activities to express not only the public but also the

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[140]Mansbridge divides democracy into two types. The `unitary' democracy `is consensual, based on common interest and equal respect'. `Adversary' democracy, in contrast, `assumes that citizens' interests are in constant conflict'. Its logic is `that every citizens' interests are as legitimate as every other's, that each shall count for one, and none for more than one.' Modern Western democracy which is built on the large-scale nation-state and the market economy is a `full-fledged system of adversary democracy'. (Jane J. Mansbridge, *Beyond Adversary Democracy*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983, pp. 3, 6, 15.)

[141]Ibid., p. 16.

[142]David Truman, *The Governmental Process: Political Interests and Public Opinion*, New York: Knopf, 1951, esp. Chapter 16, `Group Politics and Representative Democracy'.

personal interests of individual and groups.'[143] This means that modern democracy is liberal and pluralistic in nature. As discussed in the last chapter, Yen Fu was a liberal in the sense that he endorsed Mill's idea that certain areas should be left to the individual without any interference from government. He agreed with Mill that individuals should have freedom of action so long their actions do not harm others and society. However, in the area of politics which concerns not only individuals or groups but also society as a whole, Yen Fu demanded that individual actors consider the common interests of society only. This idea, in fact, made his idea of democracy extremely impracticable and vulnerable. It is difficult to imagine any working democracies in which the participants have no consideration of self or group interests. These high demands for democracy could explain partially Yen Fu's disillusion with democratic government in the wake of the 1911 revolution. In Yen Fu's eyes, the drama of so-called democracy was only the shameless pursuit of self-interest by corrupt politicians.[144] On the other hand, Yen Fu's perception of democracy as a mechanism of social harmony perhaps reveals some aspects of democracy which have been neglected by Western liberal democrats. Democracy, as Yen Fu sees it, is not only an arena of competition for different interests, but is also a platform for enhancing common interests. Yen Fu certainly believed in the existence of common interests. He also believed that common interests can not be naturally realized by individuals' pursuit of their myriad self-interests. Social unity requires that individuals consciously pursue common interests.

VII

While Yen Fu praised democracy, he nevertheless did not claim democracy to be a universally applicable form of government. `Democracy is the best form of government. If there should be a day when the five continents achieve perfection in politics, democracy must prevail. Democracy, however, is difficult to achieve.'[145]

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[143]Dennis F. Thompson, *The Democratic Citizen*, p. 2.

[144]CYFW, vol. 2, pp. 299-300.

[145]Yen Fu, *Fa-yi* (A translation of Montesquieu's *The Spirit of the Laws*), Bk VIII,

Certain preconditions had to be met before a democratic government could be established and maintained.

In his discussions of the conditions for democracy, Yen Fu paid little attention to the social, economic or institutional conditions required for democracy. The only time he broached the topic of the relation between democracy and those 'materialistic' factors was in his blunt denunciation of Montesquieu's remark that 'the natural property of small states [is] to be governed as a republic, of middling ones to be subject to a monarch, and of large empires to be swayed by a despotic prince.'[146] Yen used the example of democracy in America to show that a large country could establish and maintain democracy too.[147]

Yen Fu's discussions of conditions required for democracy were entirely focused on the cultural dimension. In this regard, his approach can be compared with that of students of political culture in contemporary political science which defines the social conditions in which democracy can be maintained in terms of a cultural basis. According to this approach, the particular pattern or patterns of attitudes and values must be present in either the whole population or a particular influential segment of it if a democratic polity is to be sustained.[148]

Nevertheless, this apparent similarity between Yen Fu and Western students of political culture is superficial. Western students of political culture usually see

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p. 3.

[146]Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, Bk VIII:20, p. 122.

[147]Yen Fu, *Fa-yi* (A translation of Montesquieu's *The Spirit of the Laws*), Bk VIII, p. 23.

[148]The most extended attempt until now to identify a democratic political culture has been made by Almond and Verba. They believe that a particular pattern of culture which they call 'civic culture' is necessary in creating and maintaining a stable and effective democracy. (Gabriel A. Almond & Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture*, Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1963; Almond & Verba, ed., *The Civic Culture Revisited*, Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1980.)

political cultures of various nations as relatively stable phenomena.[149] As a result they tend to see the influences of different cultures on political systems in a more or less deterministic way.[150] Yen Fu, however, was deeply influenced by evolutionary theories of the nineteenth century. Although he sometimes interpreted differences between social and political developments in China and those in the West in terms of general differences between their cultures, he basically saw these differences as generated by their different evolutionary levels. Moreover, when Yen discussed cultural elements in democratic transition, he argued as a voluntarist rather than as a determinist. He did not see any fundamental incompatibility between Chinese or other cultures and democracy. The significant cultural conditions for him were whether the particular level of cultural development was ready for democracy. His whole emphasis was on educational processes to raise the level of cultural development in order to establish and maintain democracy.

In this sense, Yen Fu was closer to some social and political theorists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries than contemporary political scientists. When Montesquieu, Tocqueville and Mill raised the issue of the relationship between law and `the general spirit of a nation', they emphasized that laws and political systems of a nation have to be in accordance with its `general spirit'. `It is necessary people's minds should be prepared for the reception of the best laws', claimed Montesquieu.[151] They identified what they regarded as the cultural conditions necessary for democratic systems. For Montesquieu, virtue was necessary for the establishment and maintenance of democratic government.[152] For Tocqueville, mores should be considered `one of the great general causes responsible for the maintenance of a

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[149]As Lucian Pye suggests, `culture...is a remarkably durable and persistent factor in human affairs'. (Lucian W. Pye, *Asian Power and Politics: the Cultural Dimensions of Authority*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985, p. 20.)

[150]For instance, in his analysis of Chinese culture, Lucian Pye sees some deeply-rooted psychological sentiments which are incompatible with political modernization. (op cit., p. 183.)

[151]Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, Bk XIX:2, p. 292.

[152]Ibid., Bk III:3, pp. 20-2.

democratic republic in the United States'.[153] For Mill, political machinery `has to be worked by men, and even by ordinary men'.[154] Therefore, the level of men's moral and intellectual development is a vital determinant of the forms of a particular country's government.

These ideas of Montesquieu, Tocqueville and Mill confirmed Yen's general belief in the importance of individual moral and intellectual qualities in the management of society, a belief deriving largely from Confucianism and Spencer's theory of social organism. Yen Fu had little doubt that the forms of political systems and laws must be based on the character of the people. In his preface to a Chinese translation of Ito Hirobumi's *Commentaries on the Constitution of the Empire of Japan*, Yen clearly expressed this belief:

> There are many different theories about political institutions. Nevertheless the essence of those theories is identical: The political systems are set up for people. They therefore will work only if they match the developmental level of their people. If the developmental level of the people is in a lower stage, even an excellent political system and good laws are bound to fail. When the time has come, when people become more civilized, even if some rulers want to pursue their interests at the expense of the interests of the people,...they are bound to be driven away by their people.[155]

The developmental level of the people which Yen Fu referred to was mainly the level of moral and intellectual development of the people, and moral development in particular. Yen Fu did not systematically illustrate what kinds of moral and intellectual capacities were required for democracy. His discussion of the issue was hopelessly vague and simplistic. Nevertheless, from his praise of the people in

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[153]Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 287.

[154]J.S. Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government*, p. 190.

[155]Ito Hirobumi, *Commentaries on the Constitution of the Empire of Japan* (1898), Chinese translation by Shen Hung (1901). Yen's preface is in CYFW, vol. 1, pp. 96-7.

Western democracies and his complaints about the Chinese, we can glean some of his main concerns.

In his discussion of the Ch'ing court's efforts to establish a constitutional monarchy, Yen Fu emphasized that certain conditions were necessary for such a government. He asserted,

> If a constitutional government is to be established, there must first exist a particular kind of constitutional monarch and a particular kind of constitutional people. By constitutional monarch I mean a monarch who regards himself as a public servant of the people. He considers only the long-term interests of the people above his own or his family's interests. By constitutional people I mean a people with public considerations and patriotic feeling. They also possess a certain basic knowledge. All these are impossible without civic education.[156]

In raising the issue of a `constitutional people', Yen Fu again had an ideal type of citizen in mind. His emphasis on the people's public spirit as a pre-condition for democracy, or even constitutional monarchy, suggests that he regarded what Mill termed a sense of citizenship as necessary for establishing a democratic system.[157]

Yen Fu's idea of citizenship, however, meant more than Mill's conception. As discussed above, Yen Fu did not see democracy as a mechanism for the competition of different interests. Rather, he saw democracy as a mechanism for harmonizing ruler and the ruled as well as the different parts of society. The realization of harmony should not be through competition and compromise; it should be achieved by various groups in society understanding their common interests. Democracy, for Yen Fu, was a platform upon which all participants positively and sincerely considered the public interest, and searched earnestly for the best way of pursuing the public interest. Through the democratic process, the best solution or the combination of the best parts

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[156]CYFW, vol. 2, pp. 245-6.

[157]For an account of Mill's `sense of citizenship', see Dennis F. Thompson, *John Stuart Mill and Representative Government*, pp. 37-9.

of all solutions would be adopted. In this democratic process, there were no losers, only winners. It was not surprising that such a democracy would require that the participants had a high level of public spirit and knowledge. The peoples' minds must be raised beyond self-interest before they were qualified to be democratic citizens.

Yen Fu did not realize that his discussion of the conditions for democracy and his cultural explanation of the viability of democracy raised a potentially difficult dilemma. On the one hand, democracy was justified by its promoting a sense of citizenship. On the other hand, democracy could not be established and maintained until a sense of citizenship had been developed in the people. The focus of his discussions of conditions for democracy was practical rather than theoretical. What he wanted to achieve by raising the issue of the conditions for democracy was to advocate an evolutionary, rather than revolutionary approach to democratic transition. His emphasis on a cultural interpretation of political systems prevented him from embracing a revolutionary means for establishing a better system. Since the level of the people's moral and intellectual development could not be enhanced in a short period, any attempts to achieve democracy by revolution could only be in vain. What a revolution could achieve, for Yen Fu, was only destructive. The most important task, however, was to construct a new system.[158] A new system could only be established and maintained by gradual reform. In this regard, Britain provided a most successful example. Two hundred years ago, Yen Fu wrote, the British political system was a monarchical system in which the monarch held the real power. One hundred years ago, real power was transferred to the aristocracy. Fifty years ago, the rich began to grasp power. Only in recent times had the British system become democratic in the sense that most male adults had the right to vote.[159] The representative system in Britain, Yen Fu concluded, was the result of slow evolution.[160]

Since the forms of government must match the level of the people's moral and

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[158]CYFW, vol. 1, p. 123.

[159]Ibid., vol. 2, p. 241.

[160]Ibid., vol. 1, p. 226.

intellectual development, the ideally best form of government was not necessarily the best form of government practically. The practically best form of government was that which best suited the moral and intellectual level of the people. In Yen Fu's mind, there was a spectrum of governmental form. The best was the democratic republic, which could be established only when a people's moral and intellectual development had reached a high level. Next came constitutional monarchy which was essentially democratic, yet required lower degrees of moral and intellectual development of the people than did the democratic republic. If the peoples' moral and intellectual development was even lower than constitutional monarchy required, an enlightened despotism wa acceptable.[161] Even a purely despotic government which Yen Fu criticized vigorously was acceptable in certain situations. First, when a society fell into a situation of anarchy or civil war in which people's lives were in danger, despotism was acceptable to protect people's lives.[162] Secondly, despotic government was acceptable when there was a danger of the tyranny of the majority. Influenced probably by Tocqueville and Mill, Yen Fu regarded the tyranny of the majority as more harmful to the people than the tyranny of a despot.[163]

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[161]Ibid., vol. 2, p. 241.

[162]CYFW, vol. 5, p. 1305; also, Yen Fu, *Fa-yi* (A translation of Montesquieu's *The Spirit of the Laws*), Bk III, p. 18.

[163]CYFW, vol. 2, p. 337.

Chapter VII

Pragmatism in Democratic Transition

I

Yen Fu's dilemma of democracy can be seen most clearly from his political position in two important contexts. The first was the constitutional movement of the 1900s. The second was the Revolution of 1911 and the republic which followed. The emergence of a widespread popular demand for constitutionalism in China began in 1905 following the Russo-Japanese war. Yen Fu was one of a number of intellectuals who had advocated the establishment of a parliament and the promulgation of a constitution. With the Russo-Japanese war, the demands for constitutionalism spread beyond this small circle of intellectuals to include influential officials, members of the gentry class, and, to a certain degree, ordinary people. The outcome of this war gave great impetus to constitutionalism, since the war was widely considered to be a victory of constitutionalism over autocracy. In the wake of the war, demands became louder that China should adopt constitutionalism in order to become strong and wealthy.

Yen Fu played a very active role in seeing the Russo-Japanese war as a victory of constitutionalism over autocracy. On September 3 1905, while the war was still in progress, Yen Fu, predicted Russia's defeat in an essay, `On the Root of Russia's Defeat' (*yuan-pai*) published in the *Journal of Diplomacy* (*wai-chiao pao*). As suggested in its title, the essay examined the causes of the defeat of apparent mighty power, Russia, by the presumably weaker Japan. In this essay, Yen vividly described serious corruption in the Russian government and the low morale of its army. He interpreted these weaknesses as inevitable results of the despotic system in Russia. He asserted that Russia's defeat in the Far East had deep roots, and symbolized `the dead end of despotism'.[1] No country with a such a corrupt and despotic government, he maintained, could conduct such an external war successfully.[2] In another essay of that

[1]CYFW, vol. 1, p. 164.

[2]Ibid., p. 160.

time, Yen Fu expressed this point even more clearly. He claimed that the Russo-Japanese war was `not simply a war between Russia and Japan, but a war between despotism and constitutionalism'.[3]

The victory of constitutionalism over despotism in the Russo-Japanese war, Yen Fu further argued, unmistakably demonstrated the direction of historical evolution. Both the West and China had suffered autocratic rule. Unlike China, the West had developed constitutionalism in the last hundreds years which brought it not only social stability and justice but also national wealth and strength.[4] Japan had followed the lead of the West by installing a constitutional government, and thus made great success in its efforts at modernization. Constitutionalism represented the future of human evolution and despotism represented the past. Therefore, the contest between despotism and constitutionalism could only result in the victory of constitutionalism over despotism. He wrote:

> In the process of political development, the system of constitutionalism usually emerges following the decline of despotism. We should therefore recognize that constitutionalism represents the evolutionary future of mankind. In a world demanding the coexistence of various nations, only those nations which follow the law of historical evolution will survive. Nations which fail to do so will be eliminated through competition.[5]

Yen Fu wasted no time in drawing lessons from Russia's defeat to support his argument for constitutionalism in China. He saw the Russo-Japanese war as the most important event of the early twentieth century indicating that humanity had entered a

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[3]Yen Fu, `Lun kuo-chia yü wei li-hsien tzu-chien yu k'e-hsing tzu yao-cheng' (Some feasible reform policies should be adopted before introducing constitutionalism) (1906), reprinted in *Tang-an yü li-shih* (Archives and history), 1990, No. 3. pp. 1-2.

[4]Ibid., p. 2.

[5]Ibid.

new era, an era of the growth of constitutionalism beyond Europe and North America to the whole world. The result of the war, Yen Fu suggested, would not only arouse the Russian people to fight for constitutionalism, but would also inspire the Chinese people to adopt it.[6]

To be sure, Yen Fu still faced the problem of how to reconcile the desirability of constitutionalism with conditions necessary to achieve it. Nevertheless, he believed that the people could learn to be citizens of a constitutional government only through practicing constitutionalism. He proposed to adopt some measures of constitutional reform first. As the people's moral and intellectual capacities progressed, constitutional reform could be further deepened. He wrote:

> No matter the inadequacies of the Chinese people's intellectual level, and no matter how complicated our old system is, we must adopt constitutionalism to survive. Of course, I am aware that our situation is different [from that of the West] and the level of our people's moral and intellectual development is lower [than that in the West]. Nevertheless, only by starting the process of constitutional reform now, can we break through the obstacles and overcome the difficulties of constitutionalism. Then we will be able to learn from our mistakes daily, and within twenty or thirty years we will be as advanced as the West. On the other hand, if we stick to our tradition, we will remain trapped in an outdated system and experience endless crises while Western society becomes more and more advanced and enlightened. After twenty or thirty years, when we again talk about constitutionalism, nothing will have changed, and the people's moral and intellectual levels will be as low as at present. We will not only waste several decades time, but we will fall behind the West. The reform will be all the more difficult.[7]

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[6]Ibid.

[7]Ibid.

Yen fu's argument for constitutionalism after the Russo-Japanese war was bolstered by widespread demands for constitutionalism by various political forces. Popular demands finally forced the Ch'ing court to consider seriously the possibility of constitutionalism. The Ch'ing government expressed its willingness to pursue constitutional reform in 1905. In December, 1905, the government sent five ministers to Japan, England, the United States, Germany and France to observe their governments and examine the possibilities for constitutionalism in China. The mission returned in July, 1906, and every member recommended some sort of constitutionalism.[8] In September, 1906, the Kuang-hsu Emperor, under the direction of the empress dowager, ordered high-ranking officials to begin preparations for constitutionalism. In 1908, the government announced that the constitution would be promulgated and the first elections for parliament would take place in 1916, and that the parliament would be convened in 1917. The date of promulgating a constitution was later moved forward to 1913 under popular pressure.[9]

During the period of preparation for constitutionalism, the Ch'ing government convened the first meeting of the Provincial Assemblies (*tzu-i chü*) in 1909, and of the National Assembly (*tzu-cheng yuan*) in 1910 as channels for attending to public opinion. Elections for the Provincial Assemblies took place in 1909, with very strict educational and property qualifications on voting rights and candidacy.[10] The National Assembly was to consist of one hundred imperial nominees and one hundred representatives elected by the Provincial assemblies. As one of the ten `most outstanding scholars' (*sho-hsueh-t'ung-ju*) Yen Fu was among the imperial nominees.[11] Both the Provincial Assemblies and the National Assembly were

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[8]Chuzo Ichiko, `Political and Institutional Reform, 1901-11', in *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 11, pp. 388-9.

[9]Ibid., pp. 396-7.

[10]A detailed account of the manner in which the elections were conducted appears in Chang P'eng-yuan, *Li-hsien-p'ai yü hsin-hai ko-ming* (The constitutionalists and the 1911 Revolution), Taipei: Commercial Press, 1969, pp. 12-40.

[11]Among the imperial nominees, forty-eight were imperial clan members, thirty-two officials in active service, ten most outstanding scholars and ten highest-level taxpayers. (Chuzo Ichiko, `Political and Institutional Reform, 1901-11', p. 400.)

designed as consultative rather than legislative bodies.

The Ch'ing government's measures for constitutional reform met with suspicion and anger by two major opposition groups, the revolutionaries and the constitutionalists. The revolutionaries were determined to overthrow the 'alien' rule of Ch'ing by violent revolution. They regarded the Ch'ing government's measures of promoting social and political reform, including the promotion of constitutionalism, to be simply deceptive. The constitutionalists, although generally favouring the adoption of a constitutional monarchy by peaceful means, were unhappy about the government's measures to promote constitutionalism. The constitutionalists then adopted a more confrontational position towards the Ch'ing government's proposal for constitutional reform.[12]

The main complaints of the constitutionalists regarding the Ch'ing government's measures for constitutional reform focused on two issues. Firstly, the constitutionalists criticized the principles of constitutionalism declared by the Ch'ing government which followed the model of the Japanese constitution promulgated in the Meiji era in endowing the emperor with not only sovereign power but also a commanding role in administrative, legislative and judicial processes. The constitutionalists complained that the government put too much power in the hands of the emperor and reduced parliament to a mere consultative body. They demanded that the new constitution should follow the principle of the separation of three powers, legislative, executive, and judicial, with the parliament possessing supreme power.[13] In their proposal, the cabinet should be responsible to the parliament rather than to the emperor. Secondly, the constitutionalists demanded a much shorter preparation period

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[12]'Constitutionalists' refers to some loosely organized groups favouring the adoption of a constitutional monarchy by peaceful means. 'Such groups might include government officials who memorialized in favour of the adoption of a constitution, a news editor who wrote articles discussing the way to establish a constitution, or a merchant who occasionally joined in the petitions for the convening of a parliament.' The constitutionalists' confrontations with the Ch'ing government contributed greatly to the success of the 1911 Revolution. (Chang P'eng-yuan, 'The Constitutionalists', in Mary C. Wright ed., *China in Revolution: the First Phase, 1900-1913*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968, p. 143.)

[13]Ibid., p. 163.

for constitutional government.

Yen Fu's response to the measures of the Ch'ing government in introducing constitutionalism was more accommodative and less antagonistic than that of the constitutionalists, not to mention the revolutionaries. Immediately after the Ch'ing government stated its intention to introduce constitutionalism in 1905, Yen Fu published several essays on the issue of constitutional reform.[14] He was excited by the government's intention to begin constitutional reform. He praised its decision as `a great event' in China's political development. `The government', he wrote, `has changed its previous position and has begun to consider constitutionalism in order to save the country from declining. Is this not to the good fortune of our people?'[15] These essays were intended to provide advice to the government in its efforts at constitutional reform on the one hand, and on the other to counterbalance what Yen saw as radical tendencies of both revolutionaries and constitutionalists.

Yen Fu stated that the essence of constitutional reform was to introduce certain fundamental elements from Western constitutional systems in order to transform the Chinese despotic system into a constitutional monarchy.[16] There were many elements in Western constitutional systems and the constitutional structures greatly varied. Nevertheless, he suggested that two elements were most important in defining a constitutional government and distinguishing it from despotism. These elements were the rule of constitutional law, and the system of parliament.

As we have shown, Yen Fu believed the primary distinction between despotism and constitutional government to centre upon constitutional law which bound ruler and ruled alike. He identified the traditional Chinese political system as

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[14]Those essays include: `Cheng-chih chiang-i' (Lectures on politics), February 1906; `Lun Ying-kuo hsien-cheng liang-ch'uan wei-ch'ang fen-li' (The British Constitution does not divide powers of legislation and administration), September 3 - October 22 1906; `Hsü-lung Ying-kuo hsien-cheng liang-ch'uan wei-ch'ang fen-li' (Further examination that the British Constitution does not divide powers of legislation and administration), October - December 1906; `Hsien-fa ta-yi' (The Essence of Constitution), December 17 1906. See CYFW vol. 1 & 2 for these essays.

[15]CYFW, vol. 5, p. 1242.

[16]Ibid., vol. 2, p. 240.

despotic primarily because no universal laws bound both rulers and ruled. 'The emperor was above the law. Law only bound the people and not the rulers.'[17] Therefore, Yen saw the promulgation of a constitution as the vital step to transform Chinese political system from a despotism to a constitutional monarchy. He wrote:

> What we called constitutionalism involves enacting laws. By law, I do not mean criminal laws. We have had criminal laws for a long time, without constitutionalism. Constitutionalism means enacting laws by which we the people can protect ourselves from tyranny of our rulers. Without such laws, or in other words, without constitutionalism, the benevolence or tyranny of a ruler will be entirely beyond our control.[18]

By promulgating a constitutional law in China and thereby imposing constitutional restrictions on the power and the authority of the emperor, he believed that China would take a great step away from despotism. Its significance would not be diminished even though the emperor would initially hold greater power than that held by monarchs in the West. After all, he argued, 'the powers of the sovereign and the people may vary in different nations.'[19] The most important thing was that the emperor and the people be under the rule of law.[20] 'Then the emperor would understand the law and know the limits of his power. He would understand that he must not break the law.'[21]

Constitutionalism also meant introducing democratic elements into the Chinese political system. Yen Fu wrote:

> Although constitutionalism has many meanings, it means first and

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[17]Ibid.

[18]Ibid., vol. 5, p. 1284.

[19]Ibid., p. 1258.

[20]Ibid., vol.2, p.240.

[21]Ibid., vol. 1, p. 236.

foremost adopting democratic principles. In this way, the Chinese people will have a voice in and therefore care for the business of the government.[22]

The adoption of democratic principles, for Yen Fu, did not mean replacing the imperial system by a republic. It meant setting up a parliament within the existing system. Through the establishment of a parliament, the Chinese imperial system would be able to transform itself into a system of constitutional monarchy, democratic in nature. Yen Fu's overall plan for a parliamentary system in China was less ambitious than that of the constitutionalists. First, he was convinced that the level of moral and intellectual developments of the Chinese people was not as advanced as that of the West, and he therefore proposed a strict restriction on popular voting rights in parliamentary elections. He opposed the introduction of universal suffrage in parliamentary elections during this early period. Even Britain, he argued, had not yet achieved universal suffrage. `Women do not have voting rights. There are also numerous requirements for men to qualify for voting rights.'[23] In the initial stage of political reform in China, he suggested, only a certain proportion of the people should have the right for vote. The most important qualification for the right to vote should be literacy.[24] This limitation, he believed, would not belittle the significance of the reform. After all, a certain proportion of the people had the right to vote. Gradually this right would extend to everyone.

Aside from the right to vote, Yen Fu argued for limitations on popular participation in politics. The only sphere of active popular involvement in politics was to be parliamentary elections. After an election people should not interfere in the activities of their parliamentary representatives. Probably stimulated by his reading of J. S. Mill's *Considerations on Representative Government*, Yen Fu distinguished the representative (*tai-piao)* from the delegate (*ch'ai-shih*).[25] Member of parliament

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[22]Ibid., vol. 5, p. 1268.

[23]Ibid, p.1299.

[24]Ibid., pp. 1303-4.

[25]Ibid., vol. 1, p.230; the earliest distinction between representative and delegate

should act as a representative rather than a delegate of his constituency. In parliament, 'he should act according to his own judgment and wisdom. His constituency has no right to force him to accept its opinion in parliamentary activities.'[26]

The function of parliament, for Yen Fu, should not be identical to that of the West. It should suit Chinese realities. He was highly critical of constitutionalist demands for a strict separation into three powers, thereby imitating some Western systems. Yen took pains to demonstrate that the British constitution, which he regarded as the best in the world, did not completely separate the powers of legislation, administration and justice.[27] In China, the primary purpose for establishing a parliament was to impose institutional restraints on the power of the sovereign, rather than setting up an opposing body which might be destructive of the imperial system.[28] To prevent parliament from becoming a destructive body, its role in challenging the sovereign power would be limited. Parliament to Yen was both a legislative body and a consultative body. The most important function of parliament was to express public opinion. Through a parliament, the emperor could understand the people's wishes better. In addition, parliament would cooperate with the emperor in legislation and nominations of various offices.[29]

In Yen Fu's proposal, the emperor still held the dominant power. The emperor represented the sovereign power of the country. He also acted as the head of the administration. In sharp contrast to the constitutionalists, Yen Fu argued that the cabinet should be responsible to the emperor rather than to the parliament, as in the

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was made by Edmund Burke, but Yen Fu seemed to be unfamiliar with Burke's works. His distinction between representative and delegate was most likely taken from J.S. Mill, *Consideration on Representative Government*, pp. 341-2.

[26]CYFW, vol.1, p.231.

[27]Yen Fu, 'The British Constitution does not divide powers of legislation and administration', (CYFW, vol. 1, pp. 218-30); 'Further examination that the British Constitution does not divide powers of legislation and administration', (CYFW, vol. 1, pp. 230-6.)

[28]CYFW, vol. 1, p. 236.

[29]Ibid., vol. 5, p. 1313.

early period of the British constitutional monarchy.[30] Finally, the emperor should also play a significant role in legislation and in the judiciary.

Yen Fu was more accommodative than the constitutionalists to the idea that a period of preparation was necessary before introducing constitutionalism. He was one of the activists who in the wake of the Russo-Japanese war demanded immediate constitutional reform, but after the government spelled out its intention to introduce constitutional government and began to move in that direction, Yen Fu was more or less placated. In a letter to the minister of education in 1909, he expressed his sympathy with the government's decision that several years were needed to install the parliamentary system.[31] This was not only because the Chinese people were not quite ready for a parliamentary system, he wrote, but also because certain technical work needed to be done before a parliamentary system could be realized. For instance, there was the need to draw accurate maps of the provinces and to have reliable statistics on the population before holding a parliamentary election.[32] As long as the government honoured its promise, a few years was a reasonable time to wait. During this transitional period, the government should actively prepare for the parliamentary election and speed up other reforms, such as monetary reform, educational reform, and the reform of the criminal law.[33]

There is no doubt that Yen Fu's position on constitutionalism was much closer to the Ch'ing court's position than to that of the constitutionalists. Yen sincerely wished to persuade constitutionalists to give the government more time to deliver what it had promised and not to push the country down the revolutionary path.

Yen was disappointed that his arguments fell on deaf ears both in the government and among the constitutionalists. On the one hand, he was painfully aware that the government was far from enthusiastic in pursuing constitutionalism.

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[30]Ibid., vol. 1, p. 220.

[31]Ibid., vol. 3, pp. 592-3.

[32]Yen Fu, `Lun kuo-chia yü wei li-hsien tzu-chien yu k'e-hsing tzu yao-cheng' (Some feasible reform policies should be adopted before introducing constitutionalism), pp. 4-5.

[33]Ibid.

Although he avoided criticizing government policies publicly, he complained privately that `the situation in the capital...is still as corrupt as three years ago. So-called constitutional reform is nothing but a public relations trick aimed at deceiving the people.'[34] On the other hand, he increasingly discerned a radical tendency among the constitutionalists. He was particularly annoyed at the radical ideas of Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and was alarmed by their powerful influence on society. For Yen Fu, the constitutionalists under Liang's influence were pursuing a destructive course rather than wholeheartedly striving for a constitutional monarchy. Yen later bitterly complained of Liang's writings as the most influential and yet most irresponsible of the late Ch'ing period. Under the influence of Liang's `fascinating pen', he wrote, `those simple-minded youngsters, radicalized overseas students and even old bureaucrats try to follow the fashion and rouse all to pursue the revolutionary course.'[35] He held the Ch'ing government, Liang, and Liang's followers responsible for the abortive efforts of constitutional reform which resulted in the collapse of the Ch'ing empire. The collapse of the rule of the Ch'ing, he later wrote, `resulted from the inaction of the Ch'ing court and destructive actions of K'ang Yu-wei, Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and their followers. Those two elements put together inevitably produced a catastrophe for China.'[36]

II

The breakout of revolution in October, 1911 shattered Yen Fu's hopes for a peaceful reform of China's social and political systems. His immediate reaction to revolution was shock and dismay. In a long letter to G. E. Morrison, the Peking correspondent of *The Times* in London, dated November 9, Yen Fu offered his views on the causes and the possible consequences of the Revolution.[37] He was worried that

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[34]See his letter to his wife in 1907, CYFW, vol. 3, p. 739.

[35]CYFW, vol. 3, p. 645.

[36]Ibid., p. 645.

[37]This letter was printed anonymously in *The Times* of 28 November 1911, prefaced by the following remarks of Morrison's: `I forward to you for publication a

the revolution would result in civil war or the disintegration of China. He expressed a deep pessimism about China's future in the wake of the revolution:

> One thing to be sure, according to my humble opinion, is that if they [the revolutionists] be impulsive and go too far China will hence enter a miserable stage herself, and be the cause of disturbance to the world at large. To say straightforwardly, China, as she is, is unfit for a totally different new form of government such as the Republic of America. Her people's temperament and their environments will at least require 30 years of differentiation and assimilation before they are fit to do so. Republic has been strongly advocated by some harebrained revolutionists such as Sun Yat Sen himself and others; but it is opposed by everybody who possesses some commonsense. By the law of Evolution of Civilization, the best, therefore, is to have a form of government one grade higher, that is, to remain a Monarchy, but limited, with suitable constitutions. Try to make its structure more flexible than before, so that it may adapt and progress.[38]

At the time Yen wrote the above remark, he was about to leave for Wu-ch'ang, the city where the revolution initially started, as a member of the North Delegation sent by the Ch'ing government. This group was to negotiate with the revolutionaries to seek a peaceful solution to the revolution.[39] Yen reportedly tried

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document of human interest. It is a letter written by a learned scholar, who has, largely self-taught, acquired an unusual knowledge of English. The writer is one of the learned scholars in China, a man whose name is a household word. He has taken a leading part in the introduction of Western education into China. He has studied in England, and has translated into scholarly Chinese the most popular of modern British philosophical works. I send you this letter unaltered, in all its quaint and original English.' For this letter and other letters of Yen Fu to Morrison, see Lo Hui-min ed., *The Correspondence of G. E. Morrison*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976, vol. 1, pp. 652-7; 768.

[38]Lo Hui-min ed., *The Correspondence of G. E. Morrison*, p. 656.

[39]On Yen Fu's participation in the North Delegation, see Yen Fu's dairy during this period (CYFW, vol. 5, pp. 1511-3), and Huang Cheng, `Yen Fu yü hsin-hai ko-ming

hard to persuade the revolutionaries to accept the solution of instituting a constitutional monarchy which preserved the Ch'ing emperor.[40] Yen was disappointed that the revolutionaries rejected any settlement short of a republic. Nevertheless, he was pleased that the Revolution finally had a negotiated settlement: the Ch'ing monarch abdicated in February 1912 and Yuan Shih-k'ai, the prime minister of the Ch'ing government, became the first president of the republic.

The peaceful settlement gave Yen Fu some hope for political transition in China. For a short period, Yen seemed comfortable with China's becoming a republic. He even withdrew some of his doubts about the impracticality of a republic in China. Upon the eve of the establishment of the new republic, he wrote a poem in which he compared the situation to that of an ardent lover eagerly listening for the sounds signalling the arrival of her beloved.[41] He began to weigh the possibility that China's decade-long struggle for political reform might have reached an end and that the time might have arrived for the country to make some efforts at developing its economy and solving the urgent problem of poverty. During the period of late 1912 and early 1913, Yen published several essays devoted to the issue of poverty.[42] He urged that this issue should be put at the top of the agenda of the government. He suggested that the establishment of the republic provided the best opportunity yet available in China to solve the poverty problem. For the first time, the people held sovereign power in the country. Previously government economic policies were focused on how the state could increase its revenue by collecting more taxes from the people, and the state had been indifferent to the problem of poverty.

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nan-pei ho-t'an pu-i' (Examination of Yen Fu's participation in the negotiation between the North and the South in the wake of the Revolution of 1911), in *Nanking ta-hsueh hsueh-pao* (Bulletin of Nanking University), 1980, No, 3, pp. 56-9;

[40]CYFW, vol. 3, pp. 502-3; 556; vol. 5, p. 1513.

[41]CYFW, vol. 2, p. 380.

[42]Yen Fu, `Yuan p'ing' (The root of poverty), December, 1912; `Lun Chung-kuo ch'iu-p'ing i-chung ho-chung shih-yeh' (What should be done to solve China's problem of poverty), January, 1913; `Ch'iu p'ing' (On poverty relief), April, 1913.

> The situation now is entirely different. Why? This is because the country is presently owned by our five nationalities, and four hundred fifty million people. ... Thus, when we talk about solving the problem of poverty, we mean improving the people's wellbeing. We know that when people become poor, the country will be poor. This is the fundamental difference between the present and the past.[43]

Yen Fu's optimism did not last long. The fragility of the newly-emerged democratic system was clearly demonstrated by the fierce power struggles between the parliament which was dominated by the Nationalist Party (KMT), mainly former revolutionaries, and the president Yuan Shih-k'ai. There was a deep distrust between the two sides and eventually they turned to military means to suppress their opponents. Yuan began by assassinating the chairman of the Nationalist Party, Song chiao-jen, on March 20 1913. As a response, military forces under the control of the KMT launched a military campaign against Yuan in what was then called the Second Revolution. Yuan defeated the revolutionary army, and then dissolved the KMT and the parliament. Thus the first republic quickly turned into Yuan's dictatorship.[44]

Yen Fu watched the unfolding events with dismay. These events appeared to verify his previous views on the impracticability of a democratic republic in China. He was concerned that the situation of China was degenerating into total anarchy or full-scale civil war which would entirely destroy the economic basis of the country.

Yen Fu perceived the breakdown of social and political order to have stemmed from the collapse of central political authority. He pointed out that in overthrowing the emperor, China had lost her powerful monarchical symbol of political integration with a history of two thousand years. In exchange, unscrupulous militarists and revolutionaries occupied a central stage in Chinese politics. He saw an

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[43]CYFW, vol. 2, p. 292.

[44]On struggles between Yuan Shih-k'ai and the revolutionaries in the early period of the republic, see Ernest P. Young, 'Politics in the aftermath of Revolution: the Era of Yuan Shih-k'ai, 1912-16', in *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 12, pp. 213-46; Li Chien-nung, *The Political History of China, 1840-1928*, trans. Teng Ssu-yu & Jeremy Ingalls, New York: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc., 1956, pp. 274-303.

authoritarian government led by a strong man, a `Chinese Bonaparte' in his words, as the only hope for maintaining social stability.[45] This view motivated him to support Yuan Shih-k'ai, first for his dictatorship, and later for his efforts to restore the monarchical system.

During Yuan's struggle with the revolutionaries within a democratic framework, Yen Fu was wholeheartedly behind Yuan Shih-k'ai. This can clearly be seen from his two essays published in early 1913: `On Political Party' (*shuo-tang*) and `Members of the Parliament should have Gentlemanly Manners' (*lun kuo-hui i-yuan hsu-you shih-chun-tzu chih fen*). In these essays, Yen blamed the parliament for confrontations between the legislative body and the president. He particularly attacked the party system as it developed in parliament. He assailed the various parties for pursuing their own interests at the expense of the interest of the society.[46]

Yen argued that political parties by nature were bad because they judged everything according to the party's own interest rather than the general interest of the country, the wellbeing of the people, or any other moral principle.[47] He cited Spencer as having said that political parties pursued only their own interest and thereby were biased in political judgment.[48] Of course, he recognized that democratic systems required a party system in order to function properly. In this sense, he wrote, `the party system is a necessary evil to sustain democracy.'[49] However, he added that only the particular kind of party system which had evolved in Western democracies, and not every party system, would be helpful for democracy.[50]

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[45]The phrase `a Chinese Bonaparte' is used by Yen Fu in his letter to Morrison. In Lo Hui-min ed., *The Correspondence of G. E. Morrison*, p. 656.

[46]Yen Fu's `On political party' was published in installments in *P'ing-pao*, Peking, in the period of March 6 and May 4, 1913. (CYFW, vol. 2, pp. 298-308); his `Member of the Parliament should have Gentlemanly manners' was published in *P'ing-pao*, May 21, 1913. (CYFW. vol. 2, pp. 324-6.)

[47]CYFW, vol. 2, p. 299.

[48]Ibid.

[49]Ibid., p. 300.

[50]Ibid., pp. 300-1.

Yen said that political parties in Western democracies had some distinctive features. First of all, the Western party system was built upon the higher moral and intellectual state of their people. Parties were organized not for personal gain, but for the general wellbeing of the country and its people. Parties advanced differing views of the best way of achieving the general good. For example, there were contests in Britain between the party favouring protectionism in corn trade and the party favouring free trade. There was competition between liberals and socialists in various Western countries. All these parties, Yen wrote, shared a common feature: they held some well-grounded doctrines and beliefs. They also attempted to reach a compromise and thus complemented each other.[51]

China's political parties, Yen continued, differed from those of the West. This stemmed from China's hasty adoption of a democratic republic directly from despotism, bypassing the natural stage of constitutional monarchy. `After the breakout of the Wu-ch'ang uprising, we changed our political system of thousands of years into a so-called republic within only a half-year. Without some of the necessary pre-conditions, our new political system works like a tramcar runs on a rugged and rough mountain path.'[52] Manifesting the impracticability of a republic, political parties in China by and large lacked features of the modern political party. `We have such parties as *T'ung-meng, Kuo-ming, Kung-ho,* and *T'ung-i.* ...Few of them have demonstrated the slightest resemblance of a real political party, and few will be able to foster political progress of our country. Eighty to ninety percent of these so-called parties are nothing but cliques pursuing their own selfish interests.'[53]

Yen Fu's views as expressed in these essays were strikingly similar to those of Yuan Shih-k'ai. One of the persistent accusations Yuan made of his opponents was that his opponents organized parties only to pursue their own interests. Yuan warned that `if the parties continue to maintain their own selfish ways and quarrel with each other without regard to the law, the proclaimed republic will cease to exist.'[54] Yen Fu

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[51]Ibid., p. 301.

[52]Ibid., p.299.

[53]Ibid.

[54]Ernest P. Young, `Politics in the aftermath of Revolution: the Era of Yuan Shih-

played significant roles in Yuan's advisory body, so that Yuan's statements were very likely influenced by Yen Fu.

Yen Fu wavered in his support of Yuan Shih-k'ai during Yuan's struggles with the parliament, when Yen learned to his dismay that President Yuan had arranged the assassination of the chairman of the KMT. Yen had not imagined Yuan's use of such means to destroy his political opponents. He feared that the country would inevitably collapse into a period of endless bloodshed.[55] For this and other reasons, he expressed dissatisfaction with Yuan Shih-k'ai:

> While the president is one of the most capable politicians in our time, he is at best an old-style bureaucrat. By comparison with leaders of the great powers, Yuan lacked scientific knowledge and a world perspective. Moreover, he was accustomed to asking others to obey him and has no intention of obeying others. His administration of government affairs has many defects.[56]

Yet even after the assassination, Yen Fu preferred Yuan Shih-k'ai to the revolutionaries. Yen's dislike of the revolutionaries ran so deep that he seemed prepared to accept any necessary evils to the revolutionaries. Yen bitterly denounced the KMT's Second Revolution. He compared the revolutionaries with Robespierre and thought that they posed a greater threat to the country than other political forces.[57] However, Yen never clearly indicated why the revolutionary parties represented greater danger than Yuan Shih-k'ai's dictatorship. Sometimes he seemed to suggest that the revolutionaries would impose a new type of lawless despotic rule - `merely a shift of despotic power from the Emperor to the ... National Assembly or ... the

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k'ai, 1912-16', p. 226.

[55]CYFW, vol. 3, p. 609.

[56]Ibid., p. 624.

[57]Ibid., p. 610.

Senate.'[58] He feared what he called the tyranny of the majority. At times, he suggested that the dominance of the revolutionaries would lead China into total anarchy. Yen considered Yuan Shih-k'ai to be the last hope for preventing the revolutionaries from harming the country.

Yen Fu's hostility to the revolutionaries and his faith in Yuan Shih-k'ai led to his lukewarm support of Yuan Shih-k'ai's restoration of the monarchy. Yuan's efforts began in 1915, initiated by a famous memorandum from Yuan's American political advisor, Frank J. Goodnow on difference between a monarchy and a republic.[59] The central theme of Goodnow's memorandum was that `the determination in a given country of the form of government established therein has seldom if ever been the result of the conscious choice of the people of that country or even the choice of its most intelligent classes.'[60]

> The establishment on the one hand of a monarchy or on the other hand of a republic has in almost all instances been due to influences almost beyond human control. The former history of the country, its traditions, its social and economic conditions all have either favoured the form of government which has been adopted or, in case the form of government at first adopted has not been in harmony therewith, have soon brought it about that that form is replaced by one which is better suited to the country's needs.[61]

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[58]Yen Fu, `Letter to G. E. Morrison', in Lo Hui-min ed., *The Correspondence of G. E. Morrison*, vol. 1, p. 655.

[59]Frank J. Goodnow was a professor of political science at Columbia University in the United States and the first president of the American Political Science Association before he was invited by the Yuan Shih-kai government to serve as a constitutional advisor (from 1913-1917) to assist China's effort to draft a constitution. He became known for his `memorandum to the president', conventionally known as `memorandum on republic and monarchy'. (*Peking Daily News*, August 20, 1915.)

[60]Frank J. Goodnow, `Memorandum to the President', reprinted in State Department of the United States ed., *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1915*, Washington: Government Printing Office, 1924, p. 53.

[61]Ibid.

In the case of China, Goodnow continued, because the intelligence of the great mass of its people was low owing to its lack of schools, and since the Chinese had not much experiences of participation in the work of government, 'it is of course not susceptible of doubt that a monarchy is better suited than a republic to China.'[62] Although the belief that a monarchy was better suited to China's situation predated Goodnow's memorandum, it was not until after the memorandum that the movement for restoring the monarchy gained momentum.[63] In less than a week, six men took Goodnow's opinion as the basis for the Peace Planning Society (*ch'ou-an hui*) which came to be the most important organization in favour of the restoration of monarchical system.

Yen Fu was among these six men. According to his account, Yang Tu, the central figure of the Peace Planning Society, used his name without his full authorization.[64] According to Yen, Yang Tu initially suggested that the society would be purely an academic association. It would focus on theoretical discussions about which constitutional form would best suit China's situation. Nevertheless, Yen quickly discovered that the society was an agency for Yuan Shih-k'ai's plan of restoring monarchy with himself as emperor. Yen Fu then tried to distance himself from the society, but was dissuaded by Yang Tu. Yang told Yen that it was the president's own idea to use Yen's name and warned Yen that he would be in trouble if he attempted to withdraw his name.[65] Yen claimed that he watched helplessly as his name was used in every declaration and appeal of the Peace Planning Society urging the change of China's constitution from a republic to monarchy.

There is one point to be made about Yen's account of events. His reluctance to

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[62]Ibid.

[63]Li Chien-nung, *The Political History of China*, pp. 309-11.

[64]CYFW, vol. 3, pp. 627, 631,636-7. On Yang Tu's political views in the movement of restoring monarchical system in mid-1910s, see Liu Ch'ing-po ed., *Yang Tu chi* (Collection of Yang Tu's works), Changsha: jen-ming, 1986, esp. pp. 566-607.

[65]CYFW, vol. 3, p. 636.

participate in the activities of the Peace Planning Society was not because he had different opinions from the society on the desirability of a constitutional monarchy, but because he was not happy about the means the society adopted to achieve its goal. As has been shown above, Yen Fu did not believe a republic to be a realistic choice for China before the Revolution of 1911. The experiences of several years of a democratic republic confirmed his distrust of republics. As early as 1913, Yen began to voice criticism of a republic. He wrote, `a republic is not suitable to our race' (September 1913).[66]`Our country needs a monarchy. ... This is something that a three-year old child would know!'[67]

Yet, Yen Fu was no political ideologue. He was aware that any fundamental political change either from monarchy to a republic or *vice versa* could cause a major disturbance and should be carried out with great caution. `China has a political tradition of four thousand years and a population of more than four million. Any change of its fundamental political system should not be done rashly or recklessly. Rash change might bring great catastrophe to the people and yield bloodshed.'[68] Moreover, Yen was unsure if Yuan Shih-k'ai was the person to whom the country should entrust the responsibility of monarch. Although Yen considered Yuan Shih-k'ai one of the most capable politicians of the time, he was well aware of the President's political ambition and lack of moral character. He characterized Yuan's confrontation with the revolutionaries as `fighting over legality on the surface and essentially for his own power'.[69] After Yuan assumed the office of the presidency, Yen wrote, he had been preoccupied with suppressing political opponents and had not developed any policies to address China's urgent problems.[70] Yen was also disappointed with Yuan's methods of restoring the monarchy. He considered Yuan's campaign for the restoration of monarchy an insult to the people. He regretted that

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[66]Ibid., p. 611.

[67]Ibid., p. 627.

[68]Ibid., pp. 632-3.

[69]Ibid., p. 633.

[70]Ibid., p. 638.

Yuan did not allow the people to discuss and hold a plebiscite on the issue of a monarchy versus a republic. He genuinely thought that the people would choose a monarchy over a republic if offered the chance to vote.[71] He seemed unaware of the paradoxical character of his argument: if the people were not enlightened enough to sustain a republic and needed a monarch, how could the same people know to choose the `better' system of a constitutional monarchy over a republic? If the people could have the sense to choose monarchy, why could they not sustain a republic?

On the whole, Yen seemed unenthusiastic about the restoration of monarchy, although he preferred a monarchy to a republic. This was the result of his differentiating between what one should do and what one could do. His philosophy was to work within the current system and this philosophy prevented his advocacy of any political ideology. He always tried to improve the situation in a pragmatic way.

This philosophy explains why, after the failure of Yuan's efforts of restoration, Yen Fu rose to defend Yuan when many others declined to do so. Yen Fu saw Yuan as the last barrier preventing China from entering a full-scale civil war. Against majority opinion, he argued that Yuan should not be removed from the presidency because no one else had Yuan's capacity for controlling the army and thus maintaining social order. If Yuan was impeached, various army factions would seek military solutions in their favour, and a full scale civil war would be inevitable. Yen warned that the country should not go to such extremes to solve its problems.

> A country about to perish manifests this by going to extremes in everything. Everyone is talking about saving the country, but in fact they are making things worse. There will be a day in the future when we look back and greatly regret our extreme actions today. But then it will be too late.[72]

Yen Fu's warning soon proved to be accurate. Following Yuan's death in 1916, China entered an era of warlords. Social and political order totally collapsed.

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[71]Ibid., p. 629.

[72]Ibid., pp. 641-2.

People suffered civil war and famine for decades. Yen spent his last few years in deep despair and depression. He could do nothing other than complain about militarists and revolutionaries who brought catastrophe to the country. `Since the revolution', he wrote in 1918, `two forces have been dominant in our national politics: militarists and revolutionaries. ... They should all be damned for their evil actions.'[73] Yen characterized the warlords as `unrighteous men controlling killing machines'.[74] The revolutionaries, Yen wrote, were worse still. Before they came to power, they would mobilize the masses by propagating attractive ideas like freedom and democracy. `When they come to power, they appoint their followers to every responsible position', and harshly suppress their opponents.[75]

Yen could see little hope that his country would return to peace. In a letter written in 1920, several months before his death, he wrote: `I have been thinking things over and realized that we do not have any chance for peace and order in the next twenty or thirty years. As I approach my last days and consider the current situation, I feel deeply sad for my country.'[76] In his last, desperate years, Yen Fu became somewhat nostalgic. He stated that the situation during the Ch'ing period was better than that of Yuan Shih-k'ai's presidency, which in turn was better than the current situation.[77] He was almost ready to accept any form of government which could stop the civil war. Yet even in this desperate time Yen Fu would not accept a totalitarian system as the alternative. In sharp contrast to the general excitement among radical intellectuals over the October Revolution in Russia, Yen Fu was unimpressed by the Marxist-Leninist experiment in Russia. In a letter dated September 1919, he made one of his few comments on the Russian communists:

The radical parties of the Eastern Europe differ completely both in

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[73]Ibid., p. 686.

[74]Ibid.

[75]Ibid.

[76]Ibid.

[77]Ibid., pp. 635-6.

> theory and practice from previous revolutions of the last hundred years. These radical parties hate freedom and equality, thinking them to be dying doctrines. They are committed to destroying the rich and achieving equal property. They are harsh and ruthless. I cannot bear to read the reports of their behaviour in Odessa as shown in our newspapers. Their ruthlessness has surpassed that of German soldiers in Belgium. I beg you to think how such wolves could be tolerated by the world. ... I am certain that they are not going to last long.[78]

Yen seemed to be suggesting that the nationalist revolutionaries were better when compared with the Russian revolutionaries.

Having examined Yen Fu's idea of democracy and his views of some important political events of his time, what can be said about his conception of democracy? Was he a believer in democracy? Or was he an old style authoritarian as Chinese scholars have generally believed?

In comparison to his commitment to liberty, Yen Fu's commitment to democracy was less strong. He accepted democracy as the theoretically best form of government. He denounced Chinese despotism and admired modern Western democratic systems. In practice, he was well aware that the choice of constitutional form was often beyond man's control. In a country like China without a tradition of a constitutional system, not to mention democracy, it would take at least several decades to transform the despotic system to a more democratic one. Yen preferred a gradual transition to a quick one. His conception of a transitional process was from despotism to constitutional monarchy, and from constitutional monarchy to a republic. Moreover, Yen did not consider democracy as something of intrinsic value. He had a high regard for other values too. For example, he regarded ending the civil war as more urgent than promoting democracy.

Barrington More once remarked that `the contradiction between politics and morality, never far below the surface in so-called normal times, reasserted itself with

[78]CYFW, vol. 3, p. 704.

particular vehemence in times of revolutionary change.'[79] Such a contradiction was evident in Yen Fu's case. Yen faced revolution, civil war and poverty, and seemed prepared to accept alternatives to democracy. His position regarding democracy was, to use his own phrase, `not to follow any fixed principle, but try to achieve the best possible consequences.'[80] Yen Fu's political opinions are reminiscent of de Tocqueville. During the Revolution of 1848, Tocqueville held a political position close to the group of writers known as the *doctrinaires*, of whom Royer-Collard and Guizot were the leaders. `This group', as Jack Lively observed:

> ...did not evolve any coherent system of political ideology, indeed one of their most consistent claims was that political possibilities, the demands of circumstances, should be far more important in deciding policies than any views (either retrospective or visionary, reactionary or radical) on how society ought to be constructed.[81]

As with Tocqueville, Yen Fu never abandoned his dream of a more liberal and democratic society, however remote the possibility.

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[79]Barrington More, Jr., *Reflections on the Causes of Human Misery*, London: Allen Lane, the Penguin Press, 1972, p. 38.

[80]CYFW, vol. 3, p. 615.

[81]Jack Lively, *The Social and Political Thought of Alexis de Tocqueville*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962, p. 206.

Conclusion

This thesis has focused on Yen Fu's ideas on some important issues confronting modern Chinese intellectuals, particularly issues of whether China should make fundamental changes, what kinds of changes should be sought and how these changes should proceed. Yen Fu was the first in China to systematically introduce modern Western social and political theories and one of the main figures in the generation of intellectuals which has been called the 'real transformers of values and bearers of new ideas from the West'.[1] This point, combined with his profound influence on succeeding intellectual development, allow us to relate the intellectual role Yen Fu played to the larger context of the intellectual transition from traditional to modern China.

I

One of the most important roles Yen Fu played in modern Chinese thought was his challenge to the traditional conservatism and his argument for fundamental changes through the application of Western ideas and institutions. He fulfilled these tasks primarily by his introduction of Darwinism into Chinese thought.

In contrast to the received interpretation of Yen Fu's adoption of Darwinism which emphasizes the influence of social Darwinism as a catalyst for his preoccupation with the wealth and power of Chinese nation-state, I have argued that Yen Fu did not accept the ethic implicit in social Darwinism - the ethic of justifying ruthless struggle within society or between different societies. He accepted Darwinism as a body of theory best revealing the law underlying social development. Thus his argument for change was based less on the necessity of enhancing state power in order to compete successfully in the struggle for existence than on the necessity of following the law of universal evolution.

For more than half a century before Yen Fu's introduction of Western social

[1]Benjamin Schwartz, 'Introduction', *Reflections on the May Fourth Movement: A Symposium*, ed. Schwartz, Cambridge, Mass.: East Asian Research Center, Harvard University, 1972, pp. 2, 4.

and political theories, Chinese reformers had argued for change mainly based on the necessity of enhancing the nation's wealth and strength in order to drive out foreigners. Such arguments nevertheless proved unable to overcome traditional conservatism which rejected learning from the West on the basis that the West was less civilized than China. Conservatives regarded nurturing the people's minds with Confucian moral doctrines as essential not only for building a harmonious society, but also for sustaining the survival of the Chinese as a people. They believed that moral superiority was more important than military superiority in determining the fate of a people. They cited numerous instances in China's history in which barbarous peoples invaded and defeated China militarily yet were finally assimilated into Chinese culture because China had a superior civilization.

Yen Fu's introduction of Western evolutionary theory fatally undermined the traditional conservatism. Through evolutionary theory, he described the human world, together with the natural world, as conforming to universal laws. He interpreted social development everywhere as evolving through different stages which are universal to human societies. He showed that it was historically imperative for every society to move to a higher stage of social evolution or perish.

The most significant implication of Yen Fu's argument for change based on evolutionary theory was the establishment of moral superiority of the modern Western civilization over the Chinese. He classified the modern West as lying in the highest stage of social evolution and China as being in an outdated patriarchal stage. This classification greatly weakened the Sino-centric perceptions of Chinese elites. Through this classification, Yen Fu transformed the focus of the long debate regarding learning from the West from an issue of China vs. the West into an issue of tradition vs. modernity. He represented the modern West as the symbol of modernity and moral excellence and the apogee of the evolutionary potential of humanity. He simultaneously redefined traditional Chinese culture, customs, and institutions as patriarchal.[2] Thus he was the earliest advocate of Westernization and anti-traditionalism in China which fully developed during the New Cultural Movement between 1915 and 1927.

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[2]CYFW, vol. 1, p. 136.

My interpretation of Yen Fu's justification of change differs from Schwartz's in several respects. In the first instance, my research argues that Yen Fu's intellectual concerns were much greater than merely nationalistic concerns. Yen Fu accepted modern Western social and political ideas not simply as effective means of achieving wealth and power for China, but as universally valid ideas, as valid for China as for the West. Yen Fu drew both from traditional Chinese thought and from modern Western thought not only to address national crises of his time but to address an age-old issue of Confucian tradition: how to establish a prosperous and harmonious society.

Secondly, my interpretation enables one to understand the continuity of modern Chinese intellectual discourse with traditional thought. In examining Yen Fu's interpretation of Darwinism, I have shown that underlying his rejection of Confucian orthodoxy was a core of Confucian logic. Like traditional Confucians, Yen Fu subscribed to the notion that the prosperity of a society depended on morally and intellectually cultivated individuals; he believed that the fortune of a country related to its ability to follow destiny. He also stressed voluntarist human action as the primary factor of social change. His idealized model of the modern West exhibited some fundamental Confucian virtues: intellectual excellence, moral perfection, social harmony and public-mindness. All of these reflected the influence of Confucian tradition. However, Yen Fu differed from traditional Confucians in shifting the ideal society from its Confucian context in a lost Golden age to the modern West. He considered the West, rather than China, to possess superior moral principles, higher intellectual development, and more cultivated people. The West, rather than China, seemed to have become *t'ien*'s favourite.

Thirdly, my interpretation provides a better understanding of one paradox among Chinese intellectuals of Yen Fu's time. Intellectuals like Yen Fu were politically nationalistic, and yet held almost iconoclastic attitudes towards the heritage of the Chinese past; they were culturally `pro-Western' during a period of Western imperialist encroachments on China.[3] My interpretation suggests that for a short

[3]Charlotte Furth, `Intellectual Change: from the Reform Movement to the May Fourth Movement, 1895 - 1920', in *Cambridge History of China*, vol. 12, ed. John K. Fairbank, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, p. 346.

period in modern China, from the 1890s to the breakout of the First World War, the mainstream of Chinese intellectuals displayed sentiments which were both anti-traditional and pro-Western. These sentiments stemmed mainly from the Chinese intellectuals' belief that the West represented the future of human evolution. Following the First World War, pro-Western sentiments waned while anti-traditionalism continued to dominate Chinese thought.

II

In addition to evolutionary theory, Yen Fu was also instrumental in introducing modern rationalism into Chinese thinking. I have argued that he regarded the core of Confucian morality - the principle of righteousness - as responsible for the absence of an idea of progress in China. Therefore, Yen Fu turned to utilitarian ideas derived from both Legalism in China and British utilitarianism. Yen Fu's utilitarianism exceeded Chinese Legalist concerns about the wealth and power of the state. He believed that social and political policies should be judged according to the standard of the greatest happiness of the greatest number, while the Chinese Legalist utilitarianism referred mainly to the interest of the state or the ruler.

While conceding Yen's inconsistency and reluctance to fully embrace utilitarianism either as a personal morality or as a basis of public policy, it was argued that he nevertheless accepted the view that the consequentialist principle should be at least one of the criteria for judging social and political issues. Even this limited acceptance of utilitarianism played a significant role in Yen Fu's thought. His acceptance of the consequentialist principle was one of the most significant differences separating him both from traditional conservatives and from his more radical contemporaries. It modified his utopianist tendency which was derived from both Darwinism and Confucianism. It gave Yen Fu some measure of rationalism. Based on this rationalism, he was able to make choices in his social and political discussions, rather than merely follow traditional dogmatism or dogmatism from the West.

III

The second part of this thesis outlined Yen Fu's political ideas, focusing upon his ideas of liberty and democracy. My intention was to address two different criticisms of Yen Fu's political ideas. One was presented by Schwartz, who dismissed Yen Fu's liberal and democratic ideas as little more than appropriating Western liberal and democratic ideas as means to a statist goal. The other was presented by Chinese students of modern history, which portrayed Yen Fu's thought as changing from liberal to conservative and finally to reactionary.

By examining Yen Fu's ideas of liberty, law, democracy and his position in some major political events of modern China, it was argued that his political ideas were consistent on the whole, though he changed some of his views in response to changing situations. The essence of Yen Fu's ideas of liberty and democracy was close to what Hayek called British liberalism. Yen Fu was one of a few leading intellectuals in modern China who realized the importance of individual liberty for building a better society. The liberty he advocated was what Berlin called negative liberty. Yen Fu had a very moderate aim in advocating liberty: to define a sphere - a small one initially - in which the individual could act freely without interference from the state or society; to establish the rule of law in order to prevent the tyrannical power of the state; and to limit state power both in the sphere of moral education and in the sphere of economic activity. Yen Fu's model of the achievement of this liberty was Victorian Britain.

In comparison with his commitment to liberty, Yen Fu's commitment to democracy was less steady. He embraced the ideal of democracy, but he emphasized the conditions for establishing a democratic system. His primary concern was to transform China's political system from what he perceived to be a despotism to a constitutional monarchy leaving the possibility of building a republic to the future.

Yen Fu's ideas of liberty and democracy were unique in his time. On the one hand, he criticized traditional Chinese political ideas and systems for neglecting individual interests and individual freedom, for lacking the notion of the rule of law, and for excluding popular participation in the political process. On the other hand, Yen Fu was one of the few leading intellectuals of his time to discern the danger of

radicalism. He criticized the radicalism he found among the revolutionaries of 1911.

Yen Fu's ideas differed from the radicals in defining both the goals of China's social, economic, political and cultural changes and the means of reaching them. His model was nineteenth-century Britain. Radicals of Yen Fu's time were influenced by the French Enlightenment thinkers, Rousseau in particular, by the French Revolution and American Revolution, and by the Russian Populists. They placed greater emphasis than Yen Fu on the ideals of democracy, social equality, and particularly on the role of state in enhancing social welfare. Radicals also saw revolution against the old regime as the precondition for significant improvement. In contrast, Yen Fu did not see the destruction of the political centre as a way of reconstructing society. He considered society to be a social organism having the individual as its determining component. He emphasized that a good society could only be achieved by enhancing man's moral and intellectual capacities, rather than through a revolution. Thus, Yen Fu consistently looked for ways in the existing political structure to reform society. Although Yen Fu never felt satisfied with existing rulers, either the Ch'ing emperor or the Yuan Shih-k'ai presidency, he nevertheless hoped to persuade rulers to undertake gradual and managed reforms in order to improve society.

Yen Fu's criticism of various radical ideas seems to warrant the appellation of conservatism, as some Chinese scholars have attributed to him. His conservatism, however, differed from that of traditional conservatives who were `prophets of the past'. He did not oppose all changes, but simply radical change. In this sense, he exhibited some similarities to modern Western conservatives.[4] Indeed, his harsh criticism of the revolutionaries of the 1910s is reminiscent of Burke. Like Burke, Yen conceived society as having been built through centuries of human endeavour and

[4]Noel O'Sullivan defined conservatism as an ideology characterized `by opposition to the idea of total or radical change, and not by the absurd idea of opposition to change as such, or by any commitment to preserving all existing institutions'. (Noël O'Sullivan, *Conservatism*, London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1976, p. 9.) Michael Oakeshott stated that, to be a conservative, `he will find small and slow changes more tolerable than large and sudden', and `he will accommodate himself more readily to changes which do not offend expectation than to the destruction of what seems to have no ground of dissolution within itself'. (Michael Oakeshott, `On being Conservative', in his *Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays*, New York: Basic Books Publishing Co., Inc., 1962, p. 170.

thus something to be improved gradually.[5] Yen also expressed a fundamental `hatred of the Enlightenment and especially of Rousseau'.[6]

Underlying Yen Fu's conservative liberalism was his utilitarian justification of liberty and democracy. Against those who considered Yen Fu's commitment to liberty and democracy to be only half-hearted, I have argued that his utilitarian position aimed for a middle course between extreme positions. Several studies of modern Chinese intellectual history have considered any justification of individual freedom and democracy on grounds other than regarding them as ends in themselves to lean potentially towards authoritarianism, or worse still, totalitarianism.[7] A full response to this argument is beyond the scope of this thesis because it would require an examination of the merits and the weaknesses of utilitarian liberalism itself, a subject which has dominated Western moral and political philosophy in recent decades. Nevertheless, in Yen Fu's case, it may be suggested that utilitarianism served Yen Fu well in his advocacy of a middle way regarding the issues of liberty, democracy and revolution. Utilitarianism provided him with weapons for criticizing both Chinese despotism and the newly emerged radicalism. On the one hand, Yen denounced Chinese despotism as a system destructive of the moral and intellectual capacities of the Chinese people and thus as being responsible for the decline of Chinese civilization. On the other hand, he showed that radical revolution would lead the country and its people to disastrous consequences.

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[5]Michael Freeman, *Edmund Burke and the Critique of Political Radicalism*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980, p. 3.

[6]Ibid.

[7]Notably, Benjamin Schwartz, *In Search of Wealth and Power*, pp. 237-46; Chang Hao, *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and Intellectual Transition in China*, pp. 189-206; Lin Yu-sheng, `Radical Iconoclasm in the May Fourth Period and the Future of Chinese liberalism' in *Reflections on the May Fourth Movement: A Symposium*, ed. Benjamin Schwartz, Cambridge, Mass.: East Asian Research Centre, Harvard University, 1972, pp. 23-6.

IV

This thesis has not directly addressed the issue of why Yen Fu's vision of liberalism and democracy failed in modern China, although this issue has concerned students of modern Chinese intellectual history for decades. This is because, firstly, I do not consider Yen Fu's efforts in introducing liberal and democratic ideas into China to have failed simply because his vision of a liberal and democratic system was not realized. Yen played a significant role in enlightening Chinese intellectuals by introducing Western liberal and democratic ideas. Secondly, the issue of the fate of liberalism in modern China is quite complex and is mostly beyond the scope of a study of Yen Fu. Nevertheless, I have touched upon some issues which have been often examined in answering why Yen's vision of liberalism failed in modern China.

I have examined how traditional Chinese thought might have effected Yen Fu's commitment to Western liberal and democratic values. It was argued that certain traditional ideas facilitated or prepared Yen Fu's appreciation of Western liberal and democratic ideals. This was particularly the case in Yen Fu's acceptance of modern Western democracy as a means to fulfil the Confucian ideal of *kung* (government as public property) and social harmony. On the other hand, the influence of Chinese tradition led Yen to ignore or reject certain Western liberal and democratic ideals. He was not impressed by what he called the extreme form of individualism. Following the Confucian tradition, he emphasized the individual's responsibility towards society and the necessity of self-cultivation and individual excellence. Furthermore, he regarded Western democracy as a mechanism for achieving social harmony rather than a battlefield for pluralist interest groups.

Yen Fu's interpretation of Western liberal and democratic ideals within the perspective of traditional Chinese ideas was not a distortion, but rather an intellectual reflection from a different perspective. This different perspective may shed light on the quality of Western liberal and democratic principles themselves.

The principal weakness of Yen Fu's version of liberalism lies neither in his utilitarian defence nor in his Confucian interpretation of liberal and democratic principles, but in the 'scientific' philosophy of evolution which he adopted from Spencer and others in order to promote learning from the West. To be sure, I have

shown that Yen Fu did not treat the law of social evolution very seriously. He adopted the law of evolution mainly as means of demonstrating the moral superiority of the modern West. Nevertheless, the theoretical implications of Yen Fu's evolutionary ideas exceeded the argument for learning from the West. His introduction of the ideas of evolution and progress had a profound influence on modern Chinese thought.[8] Following Yen Fu's propagation of Western evolutionary theories, the idea of universal, progressive evolution captured the best minds of modern China. As Sun Lung-kee noted, it became the most important task since the late nineteenth century for Chinese intellectuals to understand the `epoch' (*shih-tai*) they confronted, to understand the law of historical evolution, and to follow the historical law towards an ideal society. A persistent topic in intellectual discussions during the early part of this century in China was the law of social evolution.[9] Political factions ranging from nationalists, liberals, anarchists and socialists justified their political doctrines by appealing to the notion of the law of social evolution.

Before the First World War, the historical trend was generally understood to be represented by the Western democracies. This consensus changed dramatically in the wake of the First World War. The significance of intellectual change following the outbreak of war has not been explored adequately and it is beyond the scope of this thesis to provide a full account of those changes. Nevertheless, I have briefly described the sharp change in intellectual climate in the wake of the war. After the outbreak of the first World War, a consensus emerged among Chinese intellectual elites about the decay of modern Western civilization, as demonstrated by the war. While Yen Fu and some veteran reformers wanted to reconsider Confucianism to find answers for China's future, the majority of intellectuals were ready to continue to seek a realization of the ideal society. The Soviet Union immediately replaced the Western

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[8]Leo Ou-fan Lee, "In search of Modernity: Some Reflection on a New Mode of Consciousness in Twentieth-Century Chinese history and Literature," in Paul A. Cohen ed., *Ideas Across Cultures: Essays on Chinese Thought in Honour of Benjamin I. Schwartz*, Harvard University Press, 1990, pp. 112-122.

[9]Leo Ou-fan Lee, `In Search of Modernity: Some Reflections on a New Mode of Consciousness in Twentieth-Century Chinese History and Literature', pp. 110-22; Sun Lung-kee, `Chinese Intellectuals' Notion of "Epoch" (Shih-tai) in the Post May-Fourth Era', in *Chinese Studies in History*, Winter, 1986-1987, pp. 44-74.

model as the apogee of the evolutionary potential of mankind. The spread of Marxism in China in the early 1920s was accompanied by a massive debate about China's social history and the future of human development. In this debate, Chinese Marxists successfully argued that China had undergone a stage of slavery before entering a feudal stage. They claimed that these stages confirmed that the Marxist periodization of history was more `scientific' than other evolutionary theories.[10] Moreover, they argued that the emergence of the Soviet Union and the Communist movement in Europe and the decay of morals in capitalism after the first World War indicated that Communism was more `modern', and more representative of the future. In this sense, Yen Fu's introduction of Western evolutionism paved the way for the spread of Marxism in China.

[10]Arif Dirlik, *Revolution and History*, chapter 5, `Kuo Mo-jo and Slavery in Chinese History', pp. 137-79.

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